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ABSTRACT

This report examines recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers in Saskatchewan (Canada) a decade after principles of equity were voluntarily adopted by some public school divisions. Data were gathered via questionnaires completed by 25 teachers of Aboriginal ancestry, 17 graduates of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, and 15 directors of education as well as interviews with 6 teacher education program graduates and 6 directors of education. Forces that restrain and drive the successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers are outlined. Relevant issues are discussed, including the need for education equity, the Aboriginal teacher as role model, special recruitment efforts, demographic considerations, improving hiring and retention, Aboriginal teachers and school improvement, racism and discrimination, improvement for Aboriginal students, and improvement for Aboriginal teachers. The study concludes that the successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers will take place by coming to terms with the context of broader economic, political, social, and educational changes in which recruitment and retention occur. A receptive, knowledgeable, and caring school and division environment is important for success. Care and attention to the process of implementing change is as important as the results expected. Twelve recommended policy directions are described. Appendices provide background information on the project and copies of survey questionnaires. (Contains 25 references.) (JDD)

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RESEARCH IN BRIEF

The Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Teachers in Saskatchewan Schools

SSTA RESEARCH CENTRE REPORT: #94-10 DATE: Nov 1994

The rapid increase in the number of pupils of Aboriginal ancestry in Saskatchewan over the past decade and the projected increase of those numbers into the twenty-first century present many challenges to school boards. One of these challenges is to ensure that an appropriate number of qualified teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are successfully recruited and successfully retained to reflect the Indian and Mètis population in the schools. The purpose of this report is to provide a forum for the diverse views of Aboriginal teachers and those directly involved in implementing equity practices in provincial schools. Based on a survey of the thoughts and opinions of a cross-section of Aboriginal teachers and of Directors of Education, this report seeks to better understand some of the changes around recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers a decade after principles of equity were voluntarily adopted by some public school divisions in this province.

The Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Teachers in Saskatchewan Schools: An Issue of Equity in the Context of Change was developed for the SSTA Research Centre by James McNinch.

The opinions and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and may not be in agreement with SSTA officers or trustees, but are offered as being worthy of consideration by those responsible for making decisions.

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RESEARCH IN BRIEF

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THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ABORIGINAL TEACHERS IN SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concern Statement

The rapid increase in the number of pupils of Aboriginal ancestry in Saskatchewan over the past decade and the projected increase of those numbers into the twenty-first century present many challenges to provincial school boards throughout the province. (See figures 1 and 1a, p. 2-3).

One of these challenges is to ensure that an appropriate number of qualified teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are successfully recruited and successfully retained to reflect the Indian and Métis population in the schools (see figure 2, p. 11).

The main purpose of this report is to provide a forum for the diverse views of Aboriginal teachers and of those directly involved in implementing equity practices in provincial schools.

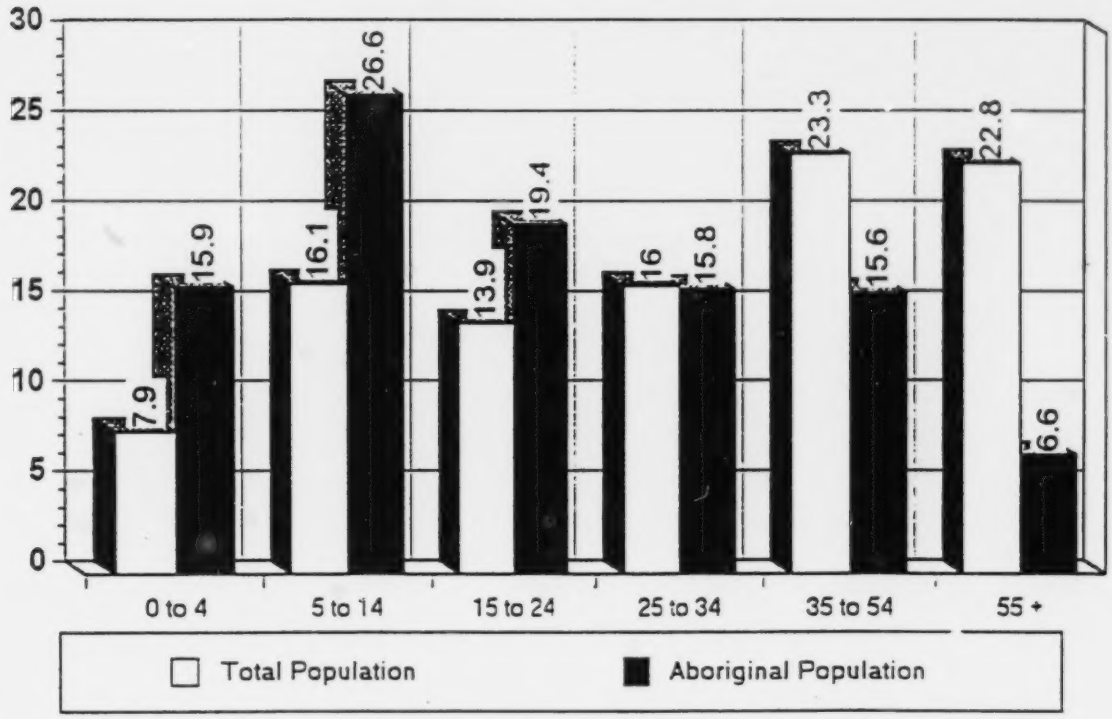
Based on a survey of the thoughts and opinions of a cross-section of Aboriginal teachers and of Directors of Education, this report seeks to better understand some of the changes around recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers a decade after the principles of equity were voluntarily adopted by some public school divisions in this province.

This kind of "action research" focuses on people's experiences and perceptions of what is happening in order to understand change, more clearly identify the driving forces and restraining forces of that change, and therefore be in a better position to prepare for further changes.

Guidelines and policy directions suggested in this report spring directly from the opinions of those surveyed and are submitted for discussion and reflection, in order to enhance what has been called "organizational learning".

This report demonstrates the complexity of the subject and the challenges to be met in creating a more equitable education system. The comments of the Aboriginal teachers and the Directors of Education who were surveyed and/or interviewed indicate the links that need to be made between equity policies and change processes, both within our schools and in society at large. The study concludes that the successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers will occur by coming to terms with the context of broader economic, political, social and educational changes in which recruitment and retention occurs.

Figure 1: Proportion of Saskatchewan and Aboriginal population by age categories



Note: Statistics Canada, 1993a (From Baillie, pg. 6).

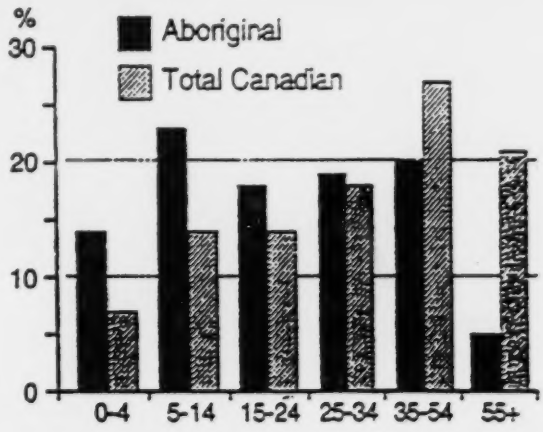
Figure 1a: Family Protraits

FAMILY PORTRAITS

Prepared by Alanna Mitchell, Social Trends Reporter

Native natality

Aboriginal population compared with total Canadian population, by age.



Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census.

As the graph shows, Canada's one-million-strong aboriginal population is far younger than the nation as a whole. In total, 55 per cent of native people were under 25 in 1991, compared with only 35 per cent of all Canadians.

But the gap is especially apparent at either end of the spectrum: the figure for 4 and under is double the national average while that for 55 and older is less than one-quarter as large.

What does this mean?

The general population had its baby boom in the 1950s and 1960s, but native people began theirs about a decade ago, and it's far from over. About half the population is just approaching its most fertile years.

This demographic bulge is one of the more compelling forces behind the growing pressure to deal with aboriginal issues in Canada.

Derived from *The Health of Canada's Children*, Canadian Institute of Child Health.

Given this context of change, school trustees and school administrators and <u>all</u> teachers should be comfortable in discussing the following questions:

1. Why should we actively recruit Aboriginal teachers?

2. Why don't more Aboriginal teachers apply?

3. Will we use preferential hiring to meet the hiring goals of our Education Equity plan?

4. Do we appreciate the diverse strengths, needs, and responsibilities of Aboriginal teachers?

5. What roles do we expect Aboriginal teachers to play in our schools? Do they know what we expect of them?

6. How is our School Division supportive of Aboriginal teachers?

7. Is it reasonable to assume that a high degree of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal issues and concerns constitutes "reasonable accommodation" or "special treatment" necessary to ensure the successful hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers?

8. What do we do in our school division to combat racism and discrimination?

9. Are the goals and processes of Equity clearly articulated and understood by the public?

10. Am I comfortable in explaining the rationale of our Education Equity plan?

The Change Process

Change is the key concept of equity both as a process and as a goal. Change is always unsettling, but it presents an opportunity to take appropriate steps in continuing to respond to the challenge of diversity. Driving forces which support recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers as well as restraining forces which hinder the process have been clearly identified by the Aboriginal teachers and the Directors of education who responded to this survey.

<..... Restraining Forces

There are a number of negative factors which tend to hinder the successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers. In summary form the restraining factors identified by teachers and directors include:

<..... There is a relatively high turnover rate among newly inducted Aboriginal teachers, even if initial recruitment has been successful.

<..... Many directors believe there is a limited number of appropriately trained Aboriginal teachers from which to choose recruits, there is a lack of qualified applicants, and in competition with First Nations schools, it is difficult to recruit Aboriginal teachers.

<..... Low turnover of existing non-Aboriginal teaching staff and the entrenchment of the concept of seniority prevents large scale change from occurring quickly.

<..... Continued resistance to Education Equity as a practice persists in some quarters and confusion about the goals of Education Equity continues.

<..... Confusion between **Education** Equity and **Employment** Equity leads to varying assumptions about the role that Aboriginal Teachers are to play in the schools.

<..... As reported by the teachers in this survey, this is compounded by a continued context of discrimination and racism in the schools.

<..... Aboriginal teachers do not feel comfortable with formal processes of reporting acts of discrimination or racism they experience.

<..... The responsibility of being a role model has in some cases become a burden to Aboriginal teachers, particularly for inductees when their role and special status are not clearly defined or understood.

<..... Some teachers suspect that there is a discrepancy between articulated equity goals and actual hiring practices, particularly when the number of Aboriginal teachers hired on permanent contract does not keep pace with the growing number of Aboriginal students.

<..... Confusion exists between the multi-cultural framework of most schools and the primary place that First Nations and Métis students and Aboriginal languages have in that framework.

<..... The power to recruit, select, and hire Aboriginal teachers is concentrated in the hands of a few people who do not represent the Aboriginal community.

<..... The demographic picture remains vague for a number of reasons: self-identification of Aboriginal Ancestry both for the general and the school age population gives a general and sometimes inaccurate picture. Only some Aboriginal students, that is, those with treaty numbers, are readily identifiable.

<..... Not all school boards have been able to identify, much less track, their Aboriginal students. (See figure 2).

<..... Some Aboriginal teachers feel they have become part of the problem, as school systems fail to meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

<..... Increasing numbers of Aboriginal students appear to present schools with an increasing number and variety of problems.

<..... There is a severe lack of Aboriginal administrators in provincial school systems.

<..... An "us/them" division exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the teaching force.

<..... Some Aboriginal teachers feel they have to constantly justify themselves in a hostile or apathetic environment not of their own making.

<..... There is the continued double-bind of stereotyping. On the one hand colleagues will say, "You're not like <u>them</u>" (the disadvantaged and at risk Aboriginal student). On the other hand they will say, "Why can't <u>you</u> deal with those students? You're one of them".

<..... There is wide-spread concern that progress towards equity is too slow in coming.

<..... Too much Aboriginal programming comes from an assumption of cultural deprivation and poverty; not enough curriculum is based on cultural richness and strengths.

<..... Aboriginal content and world-views are not widely regarded as appropriate for all students.

<..... Many fear that cut-backs to funding will retard the hiring of Aboriginal teachers and delay other equity improvements.

<..... Many Aboriginal teachers remain sceptical about the willingness of school boards to accommodate or embrace the redistribution of power implied by demographic shifts in the population.

<..... Many are uneasy about their lack of formal preparation for secondary teaching despite the fact that 52% of the survey correspondents reported they were teaching in middle years and high school classrooms. (See figure 6, p. 40).

<..... Individual Aboriginal teachers have varying and sometimes disparate views and expectations of themselves as professionals in the teaching force. Too often they are expected to represent an Aboriginal perspective that is inaccurate because of its over-generalization

<..... Fear continues that goals of equity may lead to assimilation rather than integration.

>..... Driving Forces

Directors of Education and Aboriginal teachers clearly identified a number of positive factors that support the successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers. In summary form, these driving forces are:

>..... Principles of Education Equity have become an accepted touchstone for most large provincial school divisions.

>..... There is an increasing sensitivity in society and schools to the special needs of Aboriginal students and to the intrinsic worth of their cultures and world-views.

>..... There is an increasing understanding of equity as an on-going process rather than a discrete goal.

>..... Teachers and Directors alike see the need for clearly articulated equity goals.

>.... The role of the Human Rights Commission is understood and appreciated.

>..... Good will and strong personal commitment characterize those actively working towards the goals of Education Equity.

>..... Education Equity is seen as benefitting all students.

>..... Education Equity is seen as an enabling component of social justice.

>..... It is agreed that Aboriginal teachers provide significant role modelling for all students and an opportunity for increasing and transmitting Aboriginal culture within the schools.

>..... Most Aboriginal teachers say school boards make them feel special because of their particular assets and strengths.

>..... A range of effective special efforts are being made by many school divisions to recruit teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

>..... Because of their special mandate and commitment to Education Equity and to quality training of teachers as agents of change, Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) can play a key role in the recruitment, selection, and hiring of Aboriginal teachers.

>.... Secondary training is increasingly possible within the TEPs.

>.... There will be at least 100 Aboriginal teachers graduating from TEPs in each of the next eight years. (See figure 3, p. 39).

>.... There is an appreciation that the quality of TEP graduates has never been higher; they find employment in rural, urban and First Nations environments. (See figures 4 and 5, pp. 39-40).

>..... Cross-cultural training is being promoted and accepted as a necessary component of the climate of change.

>..... Aboriginal teachers understand the importance of networks of support and appreciate the role of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the special subject council: AWASIS.

>..... The Indian and Métis Education Branch plays an important role in cross-cultural and anti-racist education and team-building in provincial schools.

>..... The philosophy and practice of Community Schools are regarded as appropriately reflecting and respecting the needs of Aboriginal students and teachers.

>..... Aboriginal teachers are motivated by a sense of purpose and idealism and get their greatest satisfaction when they see their students enjoying success in a supportive environment to which they have contributed.

>..... Many Aboriginal teachers work best in a school that provides a supportive administration and a collaborative team approach to teaching and schooling.

>..... Most Aboriginal teachers expressed satisfaction with the locations and schools in which they were teaching.

>..... Staffing, attitudinal, programming, cultural, and curricular changes are making a significant difference in many schools.

>..... Opportunities for leadership and involvement of Aboriginal teachers have never been greater.

>..... Aboriginal educators are now found, albeit in limited numbers, through-out provincial schools as teacher-aides, teachers, counsellors, consultants, vice-principals, and principals.

Figure 2: Aboriginal Student and Teacher Population

School Division	Aboriginal School Population 1987	1992	% Increase	% of Total School Population	% of Teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry (1992)
Northern Lights	N/A	N/A	N/A	75.0 (est)	26.00 (71/271 in 1993)
Regina Catholic	800 (est)	N/A	N/A	8.10	2.70 (.1% in 1986)
North Battleford	190	522	175.00	25.00	4.50 (5 / 111)
Prince Albert Composite	108	312	193.00	19.00	4.70 (4 / 85, 1993)
Prince Albert Public	795	1100	38.40	29.00	8.00
Prince Albert Catholic	606	750	24.00	29.00	5.30
Saskatoon Catholic	808	1219.00	51.00	9.00	2.90 (21.5 / 729 in 1993)
Saskatoon Public	1511	2189	45.00	10.00	3.60 (43 / 1200 in 1992)
Adapted from Baillie (p. 6) with additional information from Education Equity Reports, 1993.					

Conclusion

In surveying Aboriginal teachers about recruitment and retention, a profile has emerged of a diverse group of dedicated professionals. They are sincere, intelligent, and by turns optimistic, militant, frustrated, enthusiastic and alienated. Their hopes for the future are both personal and professional.

Leadership and power are the key issues that will continue to animate the process of change in our schools over the next decade.

Some teachers and some directors clearly see solutions and success; we can learn from them. Others see problems and failure; we can learn from them as well. Often the issue of success or failure is a matter of degree on a continuum, or a matter of differing perspectives on a matter on which there is general consensus: something very positive is being done, but perhaps without enough clarity, consistency, or urgency.

The frankness of the responses to this survey is a quality that is needed in all discussions of Education and Employment equity. It is also clear that there is no one way to be successful in achieving long term Equity goals, or more specific goals of recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers. Care and attention to the process of implementing change, respectful of each Aboriginal teacher as an individual, is crucial to achieving the results expected of a recruitment or retention strategy.

A model of some steps which school boards could take to enhance the forces which encourage the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers is found in the body of the report.

Valuing diversity, sharing power, managing change: these are the larger issues that impact on recruitment and retention. The implications of these issues extend to teacher welfare issues in general including school and grade assignment, evaluation, mentoring and support, professional development, further education and promotion.

Directors and Aboriginal teachers remain committed to providing an informed, receptive, and supportive school and division climate. The creation and maintenance of such an environment will be the biggest determinant in continuing to attract and retain Aboriginal teachers.

Policy Directions and Continued Change

The following list of suggestions flow from the comments of the directors and teachers who completed the questionnaires and are integrated into the body of the report as part of the discussion.

1. School divisions should review and articulate how their recruitment, selection, hiring, job assignment and promotion decisions are made in light of equity policies governing such processes.

2. To enhance recruitment, the League of Educational Administrators and Directors (LEADS) should invite the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs in the province, through their association known as SASKTEP, to participate in a conference to improve the formal and informal links between LEADS members and TEP faculty and staff.

3. Consistent with their Aboriginal Education Policy (1994), the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and its special subject council, AWASIS, should canvas Aboriginal teachers to discover if there are ways to improve the formal and informal links among Aboriginal teachers in this province.

4. LEADS and the STF should jointly develop cross-cultural education and anti-racist workshops and seminars to be delivered as a professional development priority for all their members, as well as providing social and professional support for both teaching and non-teaching staff.

5. The role and size of the Indian and Métis Education Branch of Saskatchewan Education Training and Employment should be expanded so that more curricula, including Aboriginal languages, reflecting an Aboriginal perspective can be developed and integrated across the grades and more piloting and in-servicing of that material can occur.

6. Saskatchewan Education should review the role and mandate of Community Schools in light of their success in attracting and retaining teachers of Aboriginal ancestry and explore the possibility of expanding that mandate to non-urban locations and secondary schools.

7. The School Trustees Association of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the Human Rights Commission, should explore the implications of expanding their Education Equity plans to cover all their employees - teaching and non-teaching, professional, administrative, and support staff - under a broader umbrella of Employment Equity.

8. The Human Rights Commission should act to extend Education Equity to all provincial school jurisdictions in order to validate the significance of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures in this province.

9. Building on the success of the TEPs in providing preparation of Aboriginal elementary school teachers-in-training, secondary training for Aboriginal teachers must become a priority in this province.

10. Aboriginal students in high school must be encouraged to enter the teaching profession. School trustees should look to providing incentives in the form of loans and bursaries to outstanding Aboriginal students who choose to become educators.

11. Directors of education should consider the role that Aboriginal advisory committees could play in assisting with the recruiting and hiring of Aboriginal teachers.

12. While there is still great under-representation of Aboriginal educators in the classroom, an even greater disparity exists at the administrative level. The SSTA and LEADS should find ways of encouraging qualified Aboriginal teachers to complete appropriate graduate work and take on positions of authority and leadership in provincial school jurisdictions.

Recommended Further Study

1. A cross-section of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students should be canvassed for their opinions about schooling and education generally, about what they think specifically of the role of Aboriginal educators, about issues of racism and discrimination, and about factors they cite that support or hinder their own success in schools.

2. No empirical evidence exists to indicate that the ancestry of the teacher has any bearing on the academic success of the students. Each teacher is accountable for the welfare of all of his or her students. But given the assumptions and significance of the concept of the Aboriginal teacher as a role-model, a study of the relationship between teacher effectiveness, student success, and the ancestry of the teachers and students, while difficult to measure, would be of great use in light of continued demographic changes in this province.

3. The comments of non-Aboriginal teachers on issues of Equity need to be heard in this context of change. A questionnaire should be developed and given to non-Aboriginal teachers and administrators in provincial school jurisdictions which do not have Education Equity Plans.

INTRODUCTION

It is appropriate to reflect on just how far we have come in the uniquely Saskatchewan experience with Education Equity since the Human Rights Commission in 1985 began inviting school boards with a strong proportion of Aboriginal students to develop Education Equity programs.

Almost a decade later we are in a position to assess the progress made in equity, and to understand the changes that are occurring in the school systems and to the concept of equity itself.

A ground-breaking report on employment equity in Canada was Rosalie Abella's **Equality in Employment:** A Royal Commission Report. Since that report, Equity is no longer seen as simply treating all people the same. "Sometimes equality means treating people the same, despite their differences, and sometimes it means treating them as equals by accommodating their differences" (Abella, 1984, p.3).

Education Equity is about responding to, implementing, effecting, and managing change, of responding to diversity, specifically in the school systems of this province to the needs of the growing number of Aboriginal children. Change is the key concept of equity both as a process and as a goal. Agocs et al (1994, p.272) notes "In written Chinese, change is represented as twin symbols: 'danger' and 'hidden opportunity'.

By calling for this survey and report, the Saskatchewan School Trustees, through the research division of their association, are coming to grips with one aspect of change: what is the impact of the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers on school systems? This change to the profile of the teaching profession can appear as a threat to the status quo and the way things used to be done but it also presents an opportunity to take appropriate steps in continuing to respond to diversity and managing change.

The social sciences refer to the qualitative research of this report as "action research". Focusing only on the number of Aboriginal teachers hired or working does not provide much insight into what actually happens in the school divisions across the province. (See Appendices 1 through 6 for a discussion of project parameters, research methodology, and language in the context of change).

This action research involves two steps: one is collecting a sample of indicators and information from the field (in this case school system administrators and Aboriginal teachers); the second stage of the action involves feeding the information back to the organizations and individuals to let them reflect and analyze the material and prepare for more changes. Harrison (1987, p.120) calls this examination of shared experience "organizational learning".

It is hoped this survey will be of some use in clarifying goals, developing new initiatives and/or changing or fine tuning policies and programs already in place. I have deliberately attempted to keep my editorializing to a minimum, except to establish some congruency with the Employment and Education Equity issues identified in the literature, in order that the voices of the school system administrators and Aboriginal teachers can be heard. I feel particularly strongly that Aboriginal teachers have not always had an opportunity to speak on these issues. If this report provides a forum for their diverse views to be validated and legitimized then it will have succeeded. It is in listening to all of these voices with their wide-ranging comments, criticisms, suggestions and ideas that we can all learn. Many thanks to everyone who took the time to talk to me and complete the survey questions. This is <u>your</u> report.

Principles of equity are grounded in change but they are also grounded on learning, on learning about the process of change.

> ....it is not possible to learn to "be equitable", as we might learn to skate, and then never have to think about it again. Learning equity, like learning democratic participation, is an ongoing process of discovery. It is a way of being. (Agocs et al, p.401)

1. Background to Continued Change

Legislation governing Aboriginal people since the Battle of Batoche and the time of the signing of treaties has been called <u>dis</u>-abling, because it treated Aboriginal people as less equal than other members of society; indeed for a long time they were not regarded as being part of the society. Whether viewed tragically, romantically, or callously, they were seen as an excluded and conquered people with little chance of survival in the twentieth century. Human Rights legislation can be seen as a counter-balance, <u>en</u>-abling Aboriginal people to have their innate equality recognized by the society at large.

The history of Indian and Métis education in Canada is a sad story of marginalization, assimilation, and racism. School systems have been notorious for resisting change and reinforcing the status quo. When the first education equity plans were adopted in this province in 1985 there were still too many glaring inconsistencies, too many incongruencies, between the inclusionary democratic goals of public education and the exclusionary injustice of the economic and social situation for Indian and Métis people. It is perhaps too easy to forget that many Aboriginal teachers working in the schools today base their own empirical knowledge of schooling on the negative experiences of their parents, their own experience as students, and the experiences at school of their own children. In many instances this experience was, and still is for some, one of discrimination, marginalization, injustice, and failure.

The monitoring process of the Human Rights Commission and the school boards tended to focus on what the literature refers to as "good numbers", that is, the number of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry hired, and the number of cross-cultural and/or multi-cultural events undertaken during any given school year. It is becoming clearer, ten years on, that education equity refers as much, if not more so, to the actual **process of change** and not only to the specific goals of that process.

How this change occurs is no better reflected than in the new monitoring process launched by the Human Rights Commission in 1993, replacing the para-legal or semi-judicial hearing format of monitoring school boards' equity plans with a new format - an educational seminar which stresses communication among the educational partners including Saskatchewan Education, the Teachers' Federation, and the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association.

This revamping of the reporting format followed from the focus on process undertaken in 1991 by the Indian and Métis Council of the SSTA. After consulting with many stakeholders in Aboriginal Education during 1990, this SSTA Council issued an action plan including a call for an annual forum to discuss not only critical issues but specific processes for dealing with those issues as well.

The SSTA followed-up on this action plan in October 1992 by sponsoring another forum to identify new directions for Indian and Métis education for the Association and for Saskatchewan boards of education.

In October 1993 the SSTA again sponsored another forum on Indian and Métis education, this time more specifically focused "on increasing the participation and representation of Indian people within the delivery and governance of public education" (Ken Krawetz, SSTA president, opening remarks, Conference Summary, p.2).

At the end of March 1994, the Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee of Saskatchewan Education sponsored a similar forum, Partners in Action: Vision for the Future, gathering educators, parents and youth together to discuss the issues of governance, participation, teaching and learning, and healing in the Indian and Métis communities.

Where does all this "talk" and "more talk" lead? The discussions of the past few years have reflected an appreciation by all stakeholders of the need for appropriate processes by which to achieve the changes required to improve the education of students of Aboriginal ancestry in this province. All stakeholders have exhibited varying degrees of patience, tolerance and understanding in recognizing that a mandate for Education Equity takes us into new, unmapped territory where the paths to success have not been easily identified even if some of the hazards and roadblocks have been.

Critics and advocates alike can grow cynical, frustrated and impatient with a lack of progress. When forums for discussion are perceived as substitutes for action, then educational "partners" become "stakeholders" and may accuse each other of "grand-standing", "protecting turf", "moving the target" and "spinning wheels". Most people involved in Indian and Métis education recognize even this, however, as part of the territory, part of the process of change. Such change means that there is sometimes apparent fragmentation or divisiveness among the stakeholder-partners: a lack of perceived unity or consensus about what the goals of equity are and how to achieve them.

2. Change, Recruitment, and Retention

Change defines the context in which school divisions implement components of their equity plans. Part of this context, a kind of sub-text for employment equity policy generally and the hiring of Aboriginal teachers specifically, are the politics of racism, sexism, poverty and social inequality. This is the context in which Education Equity operates. It cannot be ignored and the recruitment, hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry become, therefore, much more than personnel or staffing issues.

It is important to appreciate, therefore, that the hiring of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry has not been perceived over the past decade as a goal in itself. For a variety of reasons, having teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in the classroom has been conceived primarily as a means to an end: that end being the improvement of education of Aboriginal children. Little attention has been given to the impact of this component of Education Equity on the teachers themselves, except as they were seen as appropriate "role models".

Even this concept of role models has changed over the past fifteen years. When Native Teacher Education Programs first started, they articulated as one of their primary goals to provide appropriate role models for Native children. Gradually that goal broadened to say Indian and Métis teachers were role models for <u>all</u> children regardless of their ancestry. Little thought was given, however, to the implications of this role modelling responsibility on the graduates of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (the TEPs).

There is no question that even today teachers of Indian and Métis ancestry are often made to feel both honoured and burdened by this special responsibility, one that is quite different from the responsibilities that all new teachers share.

Appreciating this significant difference, between teachers of Aboriginal ancestry on the one hand and non-Aboriginal teachers on the other, is but one component of a gradual but major, and (say many respondents) "inevitable" shift in the way education is conceived of in this province. It is a much more profound change than simply having, as one TEP graduate put it, "a brown face at the front of the class". This survey shows that having individuals of Indian and Métis ancestry join the teaching profession is not something that can be appreciated in isolation. It is only now becoming clear that its impact goes well beyond the confines of the classroom.

The hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry may be seen in two related ways. First, as a goal in and of itself, and secondly as part of the major transition occurring in this province, part of a larger process of change, not just a random or merely a demographic change, but a "paradigm shift" as one respondent called it, that includes working towards the desired outcomes of Education Equity.

REVIEW OF THE ISSUES

Issue 1: The Need for Education Equity

"Both a blessing and a curse!"

The focus of Education Equity has been on Aboriginal children. Employment Equity, on the other hand, "is essentially a strategy designed to integrate historically disadvantaged groups into the existing opportunity structure, but not to assimilate them by obliterating what makes them distinctive". (Agocs et al. 1992, xx). For provincial school jurisdictions the confusion between Education Equity and Employment Equity is compounded by the fact that Aboriginal peoples seek, through education and other economic and political means, self-determination, which often implies separate structures, in addition to the right of individual Aboriginals to participate equally in Canadian society.

For Aboriginal people, access to the teaching profession, through Education Equity plans, means that once hired, key issues of retention - including professional development, mobility, transfers, promotions, job satisfaction, influence on decision-making, and the ability to exert power to effect change - are only implicit in the existing structures of the school system. In other words, as this survey shows, access to a chance for a teaching position is really just the beginning of a process of implied change for both Aboriginal teachers and the school systems in which they work. These implications are not currently being addressed in the Education Equity plans of those school divisions who have them. School boards may wish to consider extending their programs into a more fully developed Employment Equity plan to cover all their employees, including Aboriginal teachers.

Directors of education and the TEP graduates were asked the same question:

Does your school jurisdiction have an employment equity plan? Do you think it should have one? Why or why not?

It is not surprising that both sides tend to agree on the need; most of the respondents work in jurisdictions where equity plans exist. As directors of education and teachers of Aboriginal ancestry they feel not only the need but a responsibility for working for its success. While there is consensus on this issue, there is still a variety of opinions. Both directors and teachers see the necessity and the limitations of such plans. There is also an underlying feeling of frustration that plans in themselves do not work magic. There is an awareness of misconceptions about quality and capability and still from some directors and some teachers an insistence that "ability", however that can be defined, should be the over-riding criteria in hiring policy.

From the Aboriginal teacher's perspective the need is still there:

> *...to more closely parallel the actual percentage of Aboriginal kids.*
>
> *...we need more Aboriginal teachers.*
>
> *...it is important to have equal [proportionate] representation from all sectors....*
>
> *...it needs to be proportionate because of the many Natives ...moving to urban centres.*

Most Aboriginal teachers concur that employment equity is a necessary bottom line:

> *...At least employment equity is a statement of intent - they recognize that they need Aboriginal people.*
>
> *...Definitely important. It has forced particular agencies to hire Aboriginal people which they probably would not have employed.*
>
> *...Yes we have one. Yes it is important. Aboriginal teachers would probably not be hired without one. Both a blessing and a curse!*

For many teachers, and particulary for those who have been working for less than 5 years, primarily in urban centres, employment equity is about fairness and role models:

> *...the employment of Native teachers is important. The general public and administrators need to see positive role models of quality.*
>
> *...Aboriginal teachers are needed to be visible role models for [all] young people.*
>
> *...Native people teaching Native students can only lead to success in education for Native peoples*
>
> *...the high Native population needs Native role models and teachers from the same background as the children because they are more empathetic and aware of Native children's circumstances.*

More than one teacher noted that equity should include the issue of gender as well as ancestry:

More female teachers need to be hired for senior grades and administrative positions; more male teachers are needed in the elementary grades.

Another argument comes from those who believe Equity is part of the problem because it confuses the issue of competency with affirmative action and quotas. Many Aboriginal teachers believe this has weakened their position in the profession. It is Indian teachers in Indian-controlled schools who argue that Equity is not the solution and may be part of the problem:

...there is [still] a perception that we are hired simply because we are Aboriginal whether we are highly qualified or not.

...Employment should be on the basis of ability - no other factors should enter into it.

...Hiring practise [should be] that of who[m]ever they feel can best serve the students.

...always be sure that the Aboriginal teachers are capable and qualified to teach the children.

... No, our school is a band-controlled school where 85% of the staff are Aboriginal people. The non-Aboriginal people are the minority.

...Teachers should not be hired on the basis of race but on the basis of what is best for the students.

...The "problem" is compounded by having...diverse hiring standards. If a person is truly qualified for a job and better than the competition then he or she will be hired. My race is of no consequence.

This is echoed by one director who commented:

...Our school system will always continue to hire the "best" available teachers based on their instructional capabilities; it does not matter their race, creed, etc.

While appearing to indirectly flatter those Aboriginal teachers who <u>are</u> hired, this approach, assuming as it does that larger equity goals can be achieved by treating everyone the same and that merit and excellence can be gauged objectively, is often

based on historical precedence and practice that does not take change into account. It may lead, for example, to females and/or Aboriginals being limited to certain kinds of teaching assignments.

Some Aboriginal teachers, usually those who have been teaching for more than five or six years, display more cynicism than their younger and more idealistic peers who relate to the role model concept:

> *...It [our education equity plan] is not really practised.*
>
> *...I don't believe they really follow it [equity plan] though.*
>
> *...It doesn't matter. Cutbacks in funding force teacher cuts. The STF protects the staff they have. The method of implementation of all equity plans has been token at best.*

While most of the Directors of education surveyed answered affirmatively to the need for equity plans, few provided reasons for their answer. Of those who did agree that education equity plans are important and necessary, it is clearly a matter of school improvement:

> *...Yes [because] approximately 20% of enrolment is of First Nations ancestry.*
>
> *...Yes, it provides a basis, with targets, in terms of hiring and staff inservice.*
>
> *...Yes. We need to make sure our system does as well by Aboriginal pupils as others.*
>
> *...Yes. There is a need for awareness, programming and Aboriginal teachers in schools.*
>
> *...Proactive action planning...leads to more positive results.*
>
> *...Special initiatives are required to create an education system that provides equal benefit to <u>all</u> students.*
>
> *...School Divisions need to reach out and invite teachers of Aboriginal ancestry to participate in the shaping of the education program from First Nations and Métis perspectives.*

On the other hand, in smaller, often rural, jurisdictions and ones with no equity plans and a relatively small Aboriginal school-age population, it is clear that these arguments are not as strong:

> *...No. We have below 3% Native population in our schools.*
>
> *...No. Historically there have been very few Native children in our schools. This, however, is gradually changing in one of our schools.*
>
> *...Perhaps we should focus on working and living together rather than just focus[ing] on Native ancestry. Everyone is important - let's work on protecting and improving that.*

Such a multi-cultural perspective regards Aboriginal people as but one segment of a diverse school population and rejects the concept of special status in that diversity. This logic concludes that teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are simply a necessary means to an end (the improvement of education for Aboriginal children) but ultimately assumes that ancestry is not of primary concern.

Conversely, however, where there are few Aboriginal children, some directors do not see the need for Aboriginal teachers. This is one of the limitations,perhaps, of Aboriginal teachers being hired under Education Equity plans; certainly Aboriginal teachers themselves are aware of this inconsistency. Even though they want to work where there is a high population of Aboriginal children, they also see the importance of working throughout the school system, as role models for all children and for the teaching profession itself.
As one teacher with 6 years of experience commented:

> *I think Aboriginal teachers should be hired where Native children aren't as numerous. I would love to go back to a non-Native school in a few years just to be able to pass on my knowledge and help non-Natives understand Native traditions and beliefs and perhaps begin a partnership with the Native school I am at now.*

This sentiment expresses the practical side of the "paradigm shift" that is occurring in Saskatchewan schools. Some directors and many teachers see this shift in almost military terms: there are equity "battles" to be fought and won, there is talk about the "struggles". One director commented:

> *...I believe the number of **allies** is growing provincially. My personal commitment will, of course, continue.*

In this sense the issues of hiring and retaining Aboriginal teachers is about employment equity and dramatic changes in our society as a whole as much as they are about education equity and changes in our classrooms. School jurisdictions need to take into account the impact of Education Equity plans on **individual** teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, even though equity plans are directed toward organizational change and the improvement of education for Aboriginal students.

This concern for the individual begins with the process of recruiting and hiring Aboriginal teachers. Comments of directors and teachers alike clearly show how recruitment is not a discrete task separate from the larger changes. While the immediate issues then are the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers within articulated **Education** equity plans, the implied and larger issues are **Employment** equity within the context of our changing society.

RECOMMENDATION #1

THE SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, SHOULD EXPLORE THE IMPLICATIONS OF EXPANDING THEIR EDUCATION EQUITY PLANS TO COVER ALL THEIR EMPLOYEES - TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING, PROFESSIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND SUPPORT STAFF - UNDER THE BROADER UMBRELLA OF EMPLOYMENT EQUITY.

Issue 2: The Aboriginal Teacher as Role Model

The concept of Aboriginal teachers as role models is at the heart of the issues surrounding their hiring and retention in Saskatchewan. Appreciating this concept of the role model from the points of view of the directors of education and of the Aboriginal teachers themselves reveals a new understanding of the place of Aboriginal teachers in the schools

Directors were asked the following question:

What is the most beneficial aspect of having teachers of Aboriginal ancestry on staff in your schools?

Two aspects were clearly identified: significant role modelling for students and an opportunity for increasing knowledge of Aboriginal culture within the schools. These beneficial aspects do put, as teachers themselves identify, an additional burden of

responsibility on Aboriginal teachers, particularly those new to the profession. It is clear too that Directors are not generally aware that this is an additional burden; they see it primarily in terms of what the teacher has to offer the system at a variety of different levels. In many ways these Directors reflect the very great needs that exist in our changing schools. The role model concept, long espoused by the TEPs and Aboriginal communities, has been embraced by those jurisdictions with equity plans:

> *...apart from having them as role models, it is good to have teachers from all kinds of backgrounds.*
>
> *...positive role models in the schools.*
>
> *...role models, cultural awareness.*
>
> *...excellent role models but also good ambassadors for the school.*
>
> *...positive role models for all. Helps staff understand the needs of Aboriginal children.*
>
> *...It is crucial with the number of Aboriginal students in our schools that we increase the number of Aboriginal teachers.*

It is also clear that directors have high expectations of these role models:

> *...helps in the understanding of Aboriginal culture.*
>
> *...breaks barriers of racism.*
>
> *...inter-relate cultures for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It is important for white cultures to learn about their neighbours' cultures as well.*
>
> *...First Nations and Métis perspectives and world view[s] are available to staff and students.*
>
> *... they bring many necessary attributes in the way of knowledge, attitudes, [and] sensitivities that are beneficial to our students*
>
> *...[help] for staff unity and cultural awareness among adults [in the community].*
>
> *...staff learn first hand the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.*

...relationships with the children reflect the general racial make-up of society; [and they] serve to develop positive relationships in the community.

...[they] provide a solid basis of knowledge concerning the culture, history, needs and current issues.

Only one director concluded that these expectations can be a burden:

...My experience tells me that we expect too much of Aboriginal teachers when we hire them. It seems everyone looks to them for all the answers when in fact they are the same as the rest of us: we all have opinions but not all the answers.

And how do Aboriginal teachers feel about the benefits they are expected to bring to the classroom, the school, and the community? The TEP graduates were asked:

Has any school jurisdiction ever made you feel that you are a special asset because of your particular knowledge and strengths?

Seventy-five percent of the respondents answered that yes, they had been made to feel special. For many it was simply a question of them being Aboriginal, that is of being a representative of that portion of the school population they wish to serve:

...yes, I was hired to teach ABE, including Native Studies, to Aboriginal students.

...yes. Preference is given to Aboriginal teachers in our school [an urban associate high school].

...Yes, I am the first qualified teacher [of Aboriginal ancestry] teaching on the reserve.

...Yes, I am a member of the community.

...Yes, I was a trail-blazer - the first Native teacher hired in the system.

...I am an Aboriginal [in a system where] more than two thirds of the student population is Aboriginal.

... No. I think I was ...hired to fulfil requirements of a specific nature. They asked me specifically at my interview if I was Indian...or Métis. They were pleased when I said I was Indian. I don't feel discriminated [against] by them asking.

...Yes because they want me working at a school with a high Aboriginal population.

But as Rita Bouvier commented in her thesis on SUNTEP, "there is more to being an effective Aboriginal teacher than being Aboriginal". (cited in Baillie, 1994, p. 10). Most Aboriginal teachers understand that they are assets because of special skills they have which will benefit all students in the school systems.

...Yes because my major is Native Studies. I am tri-lingual: English, French and Cree.

...yes, Aboriginal languages are compulsory for our students.

...I feel that I was hired because I not only had previous teaching experience but because I was a young, educated Native woman with a degree and with a knowledge of Native history.

...I was asked to represent the Native community on committees.

...yes, because of my language and culture.

...yes, I was asked to sit on 4 different committees all of which utilize my Native Studies background.

...demonstrable skills are recognized by the diligent employer.

...the context in which I have been utilized is in ... becoming an "expert" in the area of Aboriginal content and assisting teachers in having the opportunity to get appropriate resources.

...yes, my background in Drama, Math and Science.

...yes, because of my coaching [of] volleyball and badminton.

Still others are quick to point out that sometimes expectations are unreasonably high, or at least they feel that they are:

...Sometimes because you are Native they expect that you know all there is to know. Obviously this is not the case!

...Apparently we are all knowing when it comes to Aboriginal issues only because we happen to be Aboriginal. They assume we understand everything. This is an error and applies pressure to new staff to prove themselves.

...they assume you are expert in every area of Native curriculum.

...it was my first position as a teacher. I had to help review curriculum materials for Native content. The others who were helping were TEPers, too. Would they have asked a regular first-year teacher to take that on? I doubt it (cited in Baillie, p.32).

...they allow me to do what I think is best for dealing with the Aboriginal community but when the heat is on they try to hide behind me as well.

The most articulate summary of this concept of role modelling and of the issue of unrealistic expectations came from a classroom teacher who now serves as a system-wide consultant:

...there are unwritten expectations of our Aboriginal teaching staff. They are not only required to provide for instruction of their students, but be Role Models which means there is additional pressure to lead positive lifestyles. They often feel their lives are constantly being observed. As well they must also be specialists in the areas of Aboriginal history, language, culture, traditions, arts, etc. In some instances Aboriginal staff are also asked to provide cross-cultural workshops when really this is <u>not</u> an expectation of non-Aboriginal staff.

Many teachers believe that it is the combination of Aboriginal ancestry and teaching competency that school administrators are looking for:

...they were very excited to have a Native teacher who was capable.

...Yes, because of me being Métis and my special athletic skills, the school committee believed I would help very much in the school and in the community.

...Yes, because they want me working at a school with a high Aboriginal population and because I'm asked to sit on committees that deal with Aboriginal issues.

...yes. The vice-principal sends letters of thanks and recognition for special efforts made by the elementary staff.

...yes. After two and a half years in a classroom I have been awarded a vice-principalship....I believe this shows confidence in me and in [my] TEP program.

A sense of accomplishment and rewards for a job well done - all teachers need that. For Aboriginal teachers, as the next sections will show, this can become somewhat problematical. It is one thing to represent your community, to strengthen a cultural identity and to foster pride, competency, and growth in your students; Aboriginal teachers have always been doing that. It is quite another thing, however, as Baillie (p.22) points out to be "part of the process of creating that cultural identity" in the schools.

It is readily apparent that directors of education of school divisions with equity plans see Aboriginal teachers as having special skills and assets. Aboriginal teachers concur and clearly articulate what those skills and assets are. It is also clear that their very ancestry is a dominant asset given the growth of the Aboriginal student population. This asset must not be dismissed as "reverse-discrimination" as one director and one teacher called it. It must be acknowledged as a real strength for schools and their ability to reflect the larger society and the specific communities in which they are built.

Care must also be taken when calling on Aboriginal teachers to represent the Aboriginal perspective in the school, in the community, on committees or in training sessions. Loading them with such responsibilities and assuming they are the expert on all things Aboriginal can unintentionally erect barriers where there were none. Similarly, care must be taken not to assume such responsibilities are automatically part of their job just because they are Aboriginal. As individuals they reflect varying degrees of comfort, interest, and commitment in representing and speaking from Aboriginal perspectives which are complex, political, and often only in the process of being clearly articulated by the Aboriginal communities themselves.

On the strength of the consensus between directors and Aboriginal teachers, on this issue of the assets of Aboriginal teachers as role models and skilled professionals, more success-building communication strategies and activities surrounding the hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers can occur.

Issue 3: Recruitment

Given the need for, and the strengths of, Aboriginal teachers, Directors were asked:

Does your jurisdiction make any special efforts to recruit teachers of Aboriginal ancestry?

Most directors said yes, which is not surprising, given that they see themselves as chief administrators responsible for implementing elements of their Education Equity plans. What was surprising was that few explained what special measures were actually taken.

Given the continued resistance in some quarters to education equity and the allegations of reverse discrimination, the Directors were also asked:

Is there any negative element to the recruitment or retention of Aboriginal teachers in your division?

A. Special Efforts

Most jurisdictions with equity plans have a number of similar strategies in place to enhance the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers. Two SSTA documents, Indian and Métis Education: Present Realities and Future Directions (1992) and Indian and Métis Education: Parents as Partners (1993) outline some of the initiatives that have been taken. In addition, each year jurisdictions with equity plans submit a report to the Human Rights Commission. These reports give details of the strategies and approaches that directors have used to recruit and hire teachers of Aboriginal ancestry. These approaches are consistent, by and large, with education equity principles. However, some directors, as well as some Aboriginal teachers, still believe that education equity and the issue of the "best" teacher for the job are mutually exclusive and sometimes contradictory issues rather than two sides of the same coin.

> *...Our school system will always continue to hire the "best" available teachers based on their instructional capabilities; it does not matter their race, creed, etc.*
>
> *...we do not make any special effort, but we encourage teachers of Aboriginal ancestry to apply.*
>
> *...we indicate that we invite applications from Aboriginal people on each of our ads.*

...[we] maintain a separate directory of applicants of Aboriginal ancestry.

...I attend AWASIS each year it is held.

...teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are generally included in any short list for interviews. A special file is made of Aboriginal applicants.

...we automatically short-list qualified Aboriginal applications.

Breaking barriers is easier when a "critical mass" sends a clear signal to the Aboriginal community:

...Since we have hired...[names of 3 Aboriginal teachers] we have had a large number of other Aboriginal teachers express an interest in teaching in [our] school division.

The literature on Employment Equity indicates that where there are few or no members of a designated group already employed, then an image is created, more often than not inadvertently, of an inhospitable working environment.

B. Recruitment and the TEPs

The most common method reported of recruiting Aboriginal teachers is maintaining a connection with the Indian and Métis Teacher Education Programs (the TEPs):

...frequent contact with SUNTEP, ITEP AND SIFC. Information sessions are given to third and fourth year students. Constant contact with faculty.

...meet with TEP students informally. Teach classes in a TEP and get to know the students first hand.

...contacts are made with the TEPs and the Tribal Council.

...we advertise through the TEP college training programs.

...we work with SUNTEP and ITEP to recruit teachers.

...we contact all the Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, as well as advertising wherever appropriate, eg. ITEP.

...yes. Annual visits and presentations to SIFC/SUNTEP graduates. Interviews are arranged for all graduates with the person who gave the presentation.

...make every effort to network with all the teacher-training institutions on a regular basis, including participating in the internship program.

Recruitment strategies range then from a rather passive mail out of information regarding positions available and noting the existence of equity plans in advertisements of vacant positions to some apparently very proactive on-going liaison with the students and faculty of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs.

The TEPs, however, believe that much more could be done in this area and a more consistent basis. It would appear that only a few of the larger urban boards take advantage of the knowledge of the students that the TEPS possess. One teacher advised:

I think the TEPs need to sell their graduates much more as high quality teachers and be very proud of them all.

TEPs are known for the high quality of their programming but another teacher wants that high quality for every teacher:

...I think the universit[ies] should get rid of all the TEP programs and ... improve the regular program so that everyone gets the same training.

RECOMMENDATION #2

TO ENHANCE RECRUITMENT, THE LEAGUE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS AND DIRECTORS (LEADS) SHOULD INVITE THE ABORIGINAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS, THROUGH THEIR ASSOCIATION KNOWN AS SASKTEP, TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL LINKS BETWEEN LEADS MEMBERS AND TEP FACULTY AND STAFF.

C. Recruitment and Internship

For larger urban school boards, the involvement in student teaching and internship programs provides an excellent opportunity for principals and superintendents to communicate about the special assets Aboriginal student-teachers and interns bring to the system.

...we work with principals and the informal network of which they are apart to recruit new teachers.

Every Aboriginal intern knows how important this informal network is: the cooperating teacher talks to the principal and the principal talks to one of the superintendents. But student-teachers should not be confused with interns or inductees. The relatively high degree of classroom involvement for TEP students (in comparison to the regular programs) can sometimes lead to teachers in the field having unrealistic expectations of Aboriginal students in their first or second year of training:

> *...my cooperating teacher wanted me to set up a curriculum guide for Native Studies! I didn't even know what a unit plan was then. Somebody from here [the TEP] had to talk to her and explain that I was just learning to write a lesson plan.(cited in Baillie, p.32).*

Such unrealistic expectations are a reflection of a real desire and a real struggle of non-Aboriginal teachers to meet the needs of their Aboriginal "clientele". Recruitment relates, therefore, to the experiences student-teachers and interns have in the schools. The pressure to conform to the existing culture of a school is very strong for all student-teachers and interns; for those who are Aboriginal the emphasis on meeting often unspoken expectations, of getting along, finding a comfort level and of fitting in as well as being a role model and demonstrating expertise, particularly in cross-cultural issues, can be enormous and sometimes unfair.

> *I was asked to set up a Native Awareness Week workshop for the whole school. I was barely able to work with groups of kids at the time. The thought of working with teachers and the older kids was scary. My prof telephoned...and said that I wasn't ready for that. (Baillie, p.32)*

These expectations raise philosophical questions relating to successful teaching. How can a culture or world view be "taught"? As Baillie (p.23) adds, "who is to teach it, and what will be their criteria for successful "learning"? Activity-based curricula have a danger of reducing or trivializing culture and world view to a series of isolated activities like beading or bannock-making without a focus on the process and the context of such events:

> *...I was asked if I knew how to teach legends. Well, you don't teach legends - it's part of an oral tradition. I felt awkward, [but] in the end, I **taught** legends. (Baillie, p. 32)*

The pressure imposed by these kinds of assumptions and expectations is particularly significant in light of what several Directors referred to as this "informal network" that exists between principals and superintendents when it comes to assessing the Aboriginal student-teachers and interns in the schools.

Being judged on your professionalism too early in your education program can be as damaging as being prejudged on the basis of your ancestry before you enter a school. Because this informal network has some undoubted validity as a means of assessing the merits of a potential staff member and because of the limited number of teaching positions available, recruitment for many Aboriginal teachers seems to start in year one of their program instead of during internship. For this and other reasons, several TEPs have taken to limiting the classroom involvement of their first year students, choosing instead to expose and orient them to the wider issues of school and community that define Aboriginal social, economic and educational issues.

D. Supply and Demand of Aboriginal Teachers

Directors, it should be noted, did not identify unrealistic expectations as a negative element of the recruitment process. Some directors do feel, particularly in the rural areas, that there is a shortage of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry to fill what vacant positions there may be. Directors are used to having the luxury of a wide choice of potential candidates to match the specific needs in their divisions.

> *...they are very difficult to recruit.*
>
> *...it is difficult to find people for specific jobs.*
>
> *...the supply of Aboriginal teachers does not meet the demand.*
>
> *...[there is] a lack of applications from First Nations candidates*

As all directors know, the matching of specific individuals with specific teaching assignments is an art that requires sophisticated human relations and personnel skills. While it is true that the employment rate of Aboriginal teachers is higher than it is for others with degrees in education, it is not clear that there is a shortage of individuals given the relatively small number of positions available each year. Certainly a lack of applications or a belief that the supply is insufficient cannot be used as an excuse for failing to fulfil the recruitment and hiring goals of Education Equity plans. A more difficult barrier, according to Directors of Education, is the relatively low turn-over of existing staff, combined with reduced funding and fewer over-all teaching positions where total numbers of students may be declining as the number of Aboriginal students increases proportionately.

The number of graduates from the TEPs and the number of graduates projected into the next century indicate that, while a proportionate match with the number of Aboriginal students, at least in the public systems, will take many years, there will be

an ample supply of Aboriginal teachers to fill available positions, as the figures below show. This will be even truer as TEPS and the universities make systematic changes to foster the graduation of Aboriginal students with secondary training.

E. The Demographic Picture

Recent figures from Statistics Canada, based on the 1991 census, show that Aboriginals make up 10.3% of the Saskatchewan population, a figure determined by self-identification. This figure is composed of 32,840 Métis (3.3%) and 69,385 self-identified as North American Indian (7%).

The most significant figures from an educational perspective are: 16% of the total Aboriginal population is below the age of 5 (five), 27% of the Aboriginal population is between the ages of 5 and 14, and a further 19% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24. Sixty-two percent of the total Aboriginal population then is below the age of 25. This is in conjunction with an annual Aboriginal birthrate of 3.3% which is almost twice as high as the total provincial birthrate of 1.7%. The profile of school age children will continue to change in this province at an unprecedented rate over the next decade as proportionately more and more Aboriginal children schools. **(See Figure 1, p. 2).**

Continued migration of Aboriginal people over the past decade from reserves and rural areas has dramatically boosted the Aboriginal school age population in the urban areas. Urban school divisions report increases in the number of Aboriginal students ranging from 25% to 200% in the last ten years. Statistics Canada projections to the year 2001 show this trend continuing with the Indian population of both Regina and Saskatoon doubling in the ten year period 1991 - 2001 and increasing by a third in other urban centres.

Education equity assumes that Aboriginal teachers should appear in the teaching force in approximately the same proportion as do the students. While most urban divisions have increased the number of Aboriginal teachers on staff, the numbers do not come near complementing the percentage of Aboriginal students. **(See Figure 2, p. 11).**

F. TEP Graduates

Ken Horsman's 1992 study, **Teacher Supply and Demand in Saskatchewan to the Year 2001**, basing estimates on the historical number of graduates up to 1990, projected an average of 56 Aboriginal teachers entering teaching each year. This assumed that 75% of the total graduates (75) would be available to the provincial school systems. He also noted that this was liberal because an indeterminate number of graduates would be employed in Indian-controlled schools.

Based on the numbers of students currently at various stages of a four year Bachelor of Education degree program, and relying on projections provided by the TEPs, it is clear that there will be at least 100 Aboriginal teachers graduating in each of the next four years and probably in the four years following that as well. **(See Figure 3, p. 39).**

Recent TEP graduate numbers and projections indicate that there will be a higher number of Aboriginal teachers entering the teaching force over the next 10 years. In 1994 there were a total of 133 TEP graduates (56 from the three SUNTEP centres, 45 from ITEP, 22 from SIFC, and 10 from NORTEP). Given the vagaries of funding for the TEPs, projecting the numbers of graduates beyond 1998 is a matter of some speculation. It is unlikely however that the proportional pattern of employment of TEP graduates will change. To the year 2003, given a total of approximately 110 TEP graduates per year, 59 of them (53%) will find employment each year in urban and rural schools if current trends continue. **(See Figure 4, p. 39).**

Directors and superintendents of education of provincial school systems will appreciate that this is not a vast pool to draw from. Based on the information provided by the respondents to the questionnaire which forms the basis of this report, 33% were working in First Nations schools. The remaining two thirds were divided between urban settings (44%) and rural public schools (23%) (**see Figure 5, p 40**)..

Horsman determined that only 52% of the graduates of the universities enter teaching in the following year. Recent figures from the STF show that only a quarter of recent graduates of the Faculty and College of Education are working in provincial schools.

The employment rate is much higher for TEP graduates, closer to 90 percent. Ten percent however find work in settings other than schools, usually in post-secondary, ABE, and counselling fields. Of the remaining 75 teachers, one third will accept employment in First Nations schools, leaving a pool of 50 new teachers for the provincial systems to draw upon.

It is noted elsewhere in this report that given the demand for Aboriginal teachers in other occupations and at all levels of the school system, it is not surprising to find that only 43% of the respondents are working in elementary classrooms. Thirty-eight percent identified High School assignments, while 14% were working with middle-years classes and a further 5% had system-wide responsibilities as consultants, tutors, or counsellors. **(See Figure 6, p. 40).**

Figure 3: Projected Supply of TEP Graduates to Year 2003

Year	SUNTEP	ITEP	NORTEP	SIFC	TOTAL
1994	56	45	10	22	133
1996 - 2003	35 / year	45 / year	10 / year	20 / year	110 / year
8 Year Total	280	360	80	160	880

Figure 4: TEP Graduate Employment Profile (1994)

10%	- not in Saskatchewan work force -	13
10%	- working in a related field -	13
27%	- teacher in a First Nation school -	37
35%	- teaching in an urban school -	46
18%	- teaching in a rural school -	24
100%		133

Figure 5: Employment of Survey Respondents

Employed by First Nations systems	33%
Employed by Urban systems	44%
Employed by Rural systems	23%
	100%

Figure 6: Teaching Assignments of Survey Respondents

Consultants, Counsellors	5%
High school	33%
Middle years	14%
Elementary	43%
	100%

G. Short and long term issues

It is clear that the teachers graduating from the TEPs over the next decade will be in high demand throughout this province and across Western Canada. There are important implications for recruitment and hiring strategies for school divisions. The most obvious is that recruitment processes will have to continue to be thorough, personal, systematic, welcoming, and in some instances aggressive in finding and keeping the Aboriginal teachers the provincial schools want.

Longer term strategies for identifying potential teachers among the high school population, and the mentoring and sponsoring of these students may be one way of ensuring that these talented individuals do not pursue other careers. We need these young people to join our ranks.

RECOMMENDATION #3

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO ENTER THE TEACHING PROFESSION. SCHOOL TRUSTEES SHOULD LOOK TO PROVIDING INCENTIVES IN THE FORM OF LOANS AND BURSARIES TO OUTSTANDING ABORIGINAL STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO BECOME EDUCATORS.

A few diverse comments from a number of directors are worth noting as a conclusion to this section and an introduction to the next one. Most directors say that there is no negative or down side to the recruitment or retention of Aboriginal teachers. One gets the impression that those few individuals who do make comments, however, are revealing the tip of an ice-berg that the majority, for fear perhaps of appearing politically incorrect, do not wish to acknowledge. At least these comments point to the complexity of the issue and indicate that there are no easy answers.

> *...[education equity] can create a tension when trying to also attend to gender equity issues at the same time, i.e. women who took time off to have families and now want to return to teaching.*

> *...Board members tend to feel that there is an issue only for schools where students of Native Ancestry attend. They fail to look at the Division as a whole.*

...I have had the odd [negative] question raised at Annual Meetings but when I explain our needs, people tend to support our initiatives.

...the only negative element is where recruitment results in marginal competence of the teacher. Competent dedicated individuals of any persuasion are respected by their peers.

...a little negativism occurs [among the teaching staff] because of affirmative action hiring practices.

...yes, retention is a problem. We need to work on a support system for retaining Native teachers.

It appears that the recruitment and hiring of Aboriginal teachers is often viewed in the short term. Little thought is given to the longer term issue of retention. Yet in the same way that equity policy is about achieving specific goals and about a process of change, it seems appropriate that the goal of retention should help to determine the process of recruitment and hiring. No director would argue that access to teaching positions and "good numbers" (of Aboriginal teachers hired) are the goals of equity; they are really part of the process of changing the culture, climate, and ways of doing things in the school systems. It works both ways: attention to process, attention to changing the way things are done in the schools will increase the attraction, recruitment, hiring and ultimately the retention rates of Aboriginal teachers.

Issue 4: Improving Hiring and Retention

To encourage the opinions of teachers and directors on this issue, each group was asked the same question:

Are there some guidelines or special measures that are required, in your opinion, to improve the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry? Please explain.

The comments of directors and teachers alike put the issues of hiring and retention into the context of larger educational and social issues that reflect our society in transition. It is also clear from the opinions expressed that hiring and retention are issues that cannot be dealt with in isolation from larger personnel, administrative and human rights issues.

Issues are inter-related and reflect the wholistic approach to change that is implied by the principles of Education Equity. There is, by and large, a high degree of agreement on this issue among directors and Aboriginal teachers, both on a philosophical and a practical level.

Here is what the Directors have to say about how to improve the situation. For those divisions without equity programs:

> *...targets need to be established [through] the equity program as sanctioned by the Human Rights Commission.*
>
> *...a central directory of applicants of Native ancestry [is needed].*

There is some concern and some confusion about the tax situation for status Indians teaching on reserves and a feeling that some special measures may be warranted:

> *...more education of the public re: issues like the treaties and income tax law.*
>
> *... only as it would pertain to their coming to rural Saskatchewan and the issue of income tax and working off the reserve etc.*
>
> *...the tax advantage they have to work on reserves is hard to overcome.*
>
> *...yes. our single biggest issue is that reserves draw them to employment opportunities. I don't know how to address this situation but we have lost many fine teachers because of the taxation benefits.*

It is necessary to note, however, that Indian teachers themselves do not identify this as an issue. When asked where they would wish to teach if they had unlimited choice, the majority talked about wanting to work where there is a high Aboriginal population. (See ahead p. 54). Only one respondent said:

> *I would work in a public high school if I wouldn't have to pay income tax.*

Those in band schools speak of the value of working closely with their own community, but they are also quick to point out some of the negative elements of working on a reserve, notably the lack of STF representation, the lack of contract security from year to year, and the often volatile relationship between school staff and chief and council. Several teachers remarked:

> *...I would have stayed in the public school system if I was offered a full-time position.*

One teacher, with experience both on the reserve and in the school in town recommends:

> *...on reserve teachers should be STF members - this will allow for more transferring. Treaty teachers should be tax exempt [off-reserve as well as on].*

For most Directors, improvement in hiring and retention will come through reflection, education and adaptation. It is a process:

> *...building trust relationships; creating a climate that nurtures Indian and Métis involvement.*
>
> *...cross-cultural programs need to be promoted and accepted at all levels.*
>
> *...I think we have to be sensitive to Aboriginal teachers who have had a rough start in their teaching assignment. Administrators have to make the necessary supports available so the individual can succeed.*
>
> *...yes, we need to take the time to explain our bureaucratic structures as well as provide them with a forum whereby they can address their problems and concerns.*
>
> *...for [improved] retention build a support system (linkage) with other Aboriginal teachers, elders, [and] administrators.*

Recruitment and retention are issues with both short-term and long-term goals:

> *...yes, we must continue to encourage youth to choose education as a career path.*
>
> *...yes, this depends on the funding of [Native teacher] education programs. The more stable SIFC/SUNTEP funding is, the better the quality of the pre-service education available.*

One director concluded that it is a matter of will:

> *. . . With declining enrolments and shrinking budgets we simply don't have positions available. Therefore we must strengthen our resolve to hire more Aboriginal teachers as positions do become available.*

Aboriginal teachers concur with the points made by the directors and spell out in greater detail steps that will help in both the short-term and long-term. Teachers understand that we are dealing with both attitudinal and policy issues and there is a dynamic relationship between the two. Not surprisingly there is a range of opinion on this subject reflecting the diversity of the individuals themselves and the jurisdictions where they teach. Some are critical and conservative:

...why should any teacher receive preferential hiring treatment? Dual standards all too often used cause problems.

...Hire us because we are qualified, not because we are Native.

...Aboriginal teachers should be required to [have] Aboriginal language fluency and cultural knowledge and applications: ***Walk the Talk!***

...School systems, aside from band-controlled schools, must stop the policy of Indian tokenism or as they call it - education equity!

...There are no guidelines in band schools/local control - there should be because you need a well-rounded school system with specialized areas.

...I believe many school boards have a negative attitude towards Native graduates, especially [of] TEP programs. They think we are not properly trained and ready for teaching. This is totally false! These attitudes must change!

...we need to make it clear that these ...people are being hired because they are good not just Aboriginal.

There are other teachers who feel congruency with the status quo:

...it is pretty well spelled out in the SSTA and STF Aboriginal Education Guidelines.

...[we have] the affirmative action hiring policies and education equity plans.

...I believe the hiring of Aboriginal teachers is quite good and will continue to improve.

For others, enhanced communication strategies and continuing education will improve the climate and culture of the school systems:

...[have] monthly workshops for professional development in every area that is requested by staff.

...all teachers, regardless of race, should take Native Studies at university and Native Teachers should take an Aboriginal language during teacher training.

...School jurisdictions need to have cross-cultural awareness programs for staff, board members, community members and students. Not just a day - but on an on-going basis.

...schools need to utilize traditional knowledge and incorporate it into the curriculum.

...Non-Aboriginal inner-city school teachers [should] be required to take at least 3 classes in cross-cultural education similar to what the separate system asks [re: religion].

...yes, they [school boards] must be willing to embrace Native traditions and world view.

Employment Equity reports show that targeted minorities, such as Aboriginal teachers, often feel or find themselves excluded from the "informal decision-making that happens in social gatherings outside the work setting". (Agocs: p. 55). It may be important for Directors of education to assess how wide the gap is between the official plans and formal language of equity policy on the one hand and the unofficial and informal way in which business is conducted in the division and teachers are hired and given specific school and teaching assignments.

RECOMMENDATION #4

SCHOOL DIVISIONS SHOULD REVIEW AND ARTICULATE HOW THEIR RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, HIRING, JOB ASSIGNMENT AND PROMOTION DECISIONS ARE MADE IN LIGHT OF EQUITY POLICIES GOVERNING SUCH PROCESSES.

To improve retention, many Aboriginal teachers call for a variety of support systems, networking and communication strategies to enhance their own professional development and status in the profession:

...there needs to be a network of Native teachers.

...yes, there should be an association for Aboriginal teachers/ professionals.

...yes, more support and networking within the system.

...networking: [we] need a newsletter of best practice and student progress in the field.

...Aboriginal teachers should be hired in pairs for mutual support and [learn to] ask and suggest rather than just expect.

...staff should have regular functions where they are able to communicate and possibly socialize with all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff. Communication!

...support groups, talking circles, etc. People need to vent feelings in safe situations, to know they are supported and valued.

These comments are consistent with the research on organizational communication which shows how important networking is in creating ties that connect people during processes of change. The STF and AWASIS are aware of this need, clearly articulated in the STF's Aboriginal Education Policy (1993), and must continue to address it.

RECOMMENDATION #5

CONSISTENT WITH THEIR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION POLICY (1994), THE SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION AND ITS SPECIAL SUBJECT COUNCIL, AWASIS, SHOULD CANVAS ABORIGINAL TEACHERS FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL LINKS AMONG ABORIGINAL TEACHERS IN THIS PROVINCE.

Aboriginal teachers see their own personal and professional growth and development as part of a larger process of improving the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers and thereby improving educational systems as a whole:

...[there must be] continuous evaluation and feedback and an interest [in] professional development. Time must always be given to all teachers for professional development in order to improve the effectiveness of the teacher.

The one most specific recommendation made by Aboriginal teachers regarding recruitment and hiring has to do with the selection process preceding hiring. Many called for more involvement of the Aboriginal community in this process:

...consult with all members of the Aboriginal community. One person at central office does not have sufficient expertise and knowledge to determine the best qualifications of applicants.

...[we] need Aboriginal hiring committees [composed] of those Aboriginal teachers and principals in the system.

...Aboriginal employees should be directly involved in the interviewing and hiring processes of Aboriginal teachers.

These comments reflect the fact that power is distributed unequally in the school system. Not only are Aboriginal teachers still under-represented in the classroom, they barely exist in management and decision-making roles. Ironically, the success of equity plans in attracting Aboriginal teachers to the classroom has now made the gap at the administrative level even more glaring. Focusing on the goal of hiring Aboriginal teachers creates a domino effect in the process of change in the educational system.

RECOMMENDATION #6

DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION SHOULD CONSIDER THE ROLE THAT ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES COULD PLAY IN ASSISTING WITH THE RECRUITMENT AND HIRING OF ABORIGINAL TEACHERS.

Retention of Aboriginal teachers would be improved, said several, if there was more job security and better use made of their skills:

...For one thing, I think Aboriginal teachers should be teaching Native Studies. Currently our skills are not being [well] utilized in that area. For another thing, we should be offered permanent contracts. Of my graduation class, only 1 of 6 has a permanent contract although all are successfully teaching.

There are suspicions of double standards being used by boards in hiring Aboriginal teachers. This would be alleviated, says another teacher, if education equity were given the priority it deserved:

...Teacher-pupil ratios should be the number of Aboriginal teachers to Aboriginal students and the STF and the SSTA must allow this.

When Aboriginal teachers were asked the following question:

If there was one thing you could say anonymously to your principal or superintendent, what would that be?

they responded with a list of recommendations that put the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Aboriginal teachers onto a continuum of improved education for all. Comments range from the terse "Quit!" to an exasperated "Why on earth would I want to remain anonymous!" as well as lengthier calls for greater collaboration between staff and administration and recognition of initiative and accomplishments of both students and staff. It should be noted that criticism of administration was strongest from teachers in band-controlled schools.

This question elicited the most specific comments and suggestions because it was grounded in the actual day-to-day work situation of each teacher. What the comments reveal is a portrait of a dedicated and often frustrated professional, a teacher very much aware of the failings of a system they are now part of, and wanting very much to help fix it:

...There is so much more to do. Do not be satisfied with token gestures and programs.

...if they are going to implement special programming such as Native Studies 10/20/30, then administration should support it from the heart and not do it superficially.

...allow Aboriginal teachers to be flexible in adding and/or deleting curriculum components. Strict and structured curriculum guides are boring and stifling (and burn the USA based textbooks!)

...Stick to your guidelines when you advertise.

...I don't believe the women in our school are taken as seriously as the men in terms of their input and opinions.

...Aboriginal teachers expect to be treated with the same kind of professional respect as other teachers.

...Ensure better communication between staff and board members.

...Hire more Aboriginal people at all grade levels.

...Hire more Aboriginal people in administrative capacities.

...Aboriginal teachers cannot solve all Indian problems and do not understand all cultural situations.

...Be more aware of current issues faced by Aboriginal students.

...Forget about the student/teacher ratio and look at the needs of the kids.

...Hire a liaison officer for the students who are so badly absent from class. Don't write them off.

...Fight for me with your superiors. Help me get those extra dollars instead of justifying your argument by quoting policy.

...Native teachers need to be in all types of schools. Multi-cultural awareness and erasing the stereotypical view of Natives needs to be taught in every classroom.

...Please reflect on your methods of discipline. Do you really treat all students fairly? Or might racism affect the situation and your reaction?

...Please remember that as an administrator you must have an open mind to new ideas, new lifestyles. As a visitor to a Native community you are not better than anyone else just because you have a job or more education than most.

...Before you open your mouth - think. You have said some pretty ignorant things about Natives. At least try to be sensitive to Aboriginal peoples' feelings.

...You are not qualified for the position you are in.

...You don't belong here [band school]; you aren't aware and don't want to be aware of Native issues.

...Get rid of the Eurocentric attitude that intelligence is culturally defined. Admit to the fact that educational institutions are agents of racism, colonialism, socialization and assimilation.

...Boards must provide materials and resources and people to assist in the commitment to a child-centred, Aboriginal-oriented curricula. We need Aboriginal content to motivate and encourage ourselves so that we can pass it on to our students, our future. Challenge us and we will attain the goals of our elders, our ancestors.

*...Hire and fire who[m] you must to have a positive learning environment for **all** students. I could give names but I would like to do that in person.*

*...Fire certain teachers and let's take on the Union. Things **must** change; we cannot continue to let kids fall through the cracks because the Union protects old tired teachers who don't have what it takes anymore.*

...Training, videos, workshops, inservices, etc. should be available to all teachers so we can <u>all</u> help Native students feel part of our school systems. An example of a topic: explaining the healing process required because of the oppression of our people and how this has affected the young today.

...Aboriginal teachers must be looked at as individuals and not categorized.... Give us choices in what we feel comfortable teaching about our cultures. Provide support for us. Learn our cultures and where we are coming from. Learn to understand without judging.

Issue 5: Aboriginal Teachers and School Improvement

What emerges from this survey is a composite snapshot of a variety of individuals, many with strongly-held beliefs and an insistence that systems must change and education for Aboriginals must improve. This portrait of the dedicated professional is further enhanced by the responses to two related questions. Aboriginal teachers were asked:

What is the best thing and the worst thing about the job you currently have?

A. Difficulties

Again, there is a wide range of concerns about working conditions, cross-cultural issues, morale, and concrete ways of defining progress and equity. Concern is expressed about budget cuts and its impact on programming, lack of training at the secondary level, temporary contracts and the low wages of new teachers, lack of support or perceived favouritism or jealousy from administration, and frustration at the lack of resources and direction in the area of Indian languages.

There is real concern for the students:

> *...the worst thing is the sense that some students feel education is unimportant.*
>
> *...there are so many needy kids in one classroom.*
>
> *...the worst thing about my job is not seeing the progress in my students that I would like and having to struggle to educate them when so many students' lives are chaotic and unhealthy.*
>
> *...the worst is lack of parental support.*
>
> *...the worst thing is dealing with parents who feel their kid isn't being treated right.*
>
> *...At times I feel frustrated [with] how the school system is failing Aboriginal students. The high dropout rate indicates change is required in all schools whether they have a high Native enrolment or not.*

Others vent frustrations at some staff members and administration:

> *...Worst: having to clue in all those uneducated unenlightened folks who continue to voice their ignorance is a pain.*
>
> *...the worst thing is that some teachers expect a recipe or an instant remedy for teaching Native students.*
>
> *...the worst thing is listening to staff members making discriminatory remarks in the staff room.*
>
> *...the worst thing is having to teach with racist teachers who show negative emotions towards Aboriginal students most of the time.*
>
> *...the in-school racism of some Native teachers towards the white teachers.*
>
> *...worst: working with non-Native staff who believe they are superior to Native people by virtue of their race and education.*
>
> *...the worst thing is the mediocre teachers who constantly complain and see their job as a right, not a privilege. They always want to do less for more pay.*

B. Strategies for Improvement

When you look at the other side of the question about what is the **best** aspect of the work Aboriginal teachers do, it is obvious that job satisfaction comes from two areas: supportive fellow staff members and the relationship and rapport that can develop between teacher and students. The teachers who commented of the supportive environment teach in community schools or band-controlled schools or specially designated high schools and often feel they live and work in a supportive wider community as well. Schools where this occurs seem to be schools where Aboriginal teachers want to teach and where Aboriginal children will want to succeed. Equity Reports from many jurisdictions point to similarities in these kinds of schools: the system is changed to accommodate the needs of the students, there is a high degree of commitment and flexibility by staff and administration, there is a network of local inter-agency support, and support and involvement of the parents.

> *...best: a strong and supportive administrative team at my school.*
>
> *...excellent school board as employer.*
>
> *...having a board sponsored opportunity to further my education towards a Master's degree.*
>
> *...being part of an Indian and Métis* ***team.***
>
> *...best thing: elder involvement and support*
>
> *...the best thing about my job is the freedom and support I have to be creative and experiment with techniques in my classroom.*
>
> *...the best: the small cohesive working relationship within the school.*
>
> *...our [Indian-controlled] board has confidence in teachers' judgements, especially when made in the best interests of the students.*
>
> *...the low numbers in the classrooms have helped many students excel at their studies.*
>
> *...Students are succeeding, [I have] real friends on staff and work in a great community [northern reserve].*

With this kind of support enhancing a feeling of belonging and sharing in a common goal, the teachers' greatest reward is the success of the students.

...learning and teaching now about who Aboriginal people can and will be is exciting.

...The best: working and helping kids who really are needy.

...I feel I'm making [a] small difference in helping Native children to succeed in the school system.

...I work with my own people and can really relate to high school students.

...the best thing is that I'm with students whose background I'm comfortable with. I grew up in much the same way as these students with the same kinds of socio-economic problems.

...the best thing is the students and the empowerment I am able to pass on to them.

...in this [band] school I have unlimited opportunities to teach the students outside the regular classroom.

...the best thing is the relationship I can build with the kids.

RECOMMENDATION #7

SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATION SHOULD REVIEW THE ROLE AND MANDATE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN LIGHT OF THEIR SUCCESS IN ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TEACHERS OF ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPANDING THAT MANDATE TO NON-URBAN LOCATIONS AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

C. Location:

Most of the Aboriginal teachers surveyed indicated a generally high degree of satisfaction with the location where they were currently working when they were asked:

If you had unlimited choice, in what school/location would you teach? Why?

Reasons vary, of course, reflecting the diversity of individuals who participated in the survey. Comfort level with what one is familiar is important: "Saskatoon, it's my home town", but location brings different experiences and preferences: "Victoria - it's warm there!". There is, however, a consistently high degree of commitment and idealism

expressed in all the answers. Aboriginal teachers know that they are agents of change and they want to be where they can make a difference and that is usually where attention is given to cross-cultural differences and there are high numbers of Aboriginal children. That is the key factor in determining what makes a location ideal or not.

> *...I would like to teach in another country, New Zealand preferably, working with the Maori. I feel they have much to offer.*

> *...right where I am [rural public] because of the high Aboriginal population, the knowledge and contacts, and knowing that I am making a difference.*

For many, inner-city schools are attractive:

> *...I prefer to stay with the inner-city schools. The percentage of Native children is higher and I enjoy working in a more informal situation.*

> *...Inner-city elementary or high school. I feel I have more of an impact on Aboriginal students and other staff.*

> *...an inner-city school because that's where the most challenges are. There is poverty, racism, unequal opportunities and lots of hurting children.*

> *...inner city high school (where I'll be in September) to keep Indian and Métis students from giving up.*

> *...I would stay where I am [urban high school] because I feel comfortable and needed there even though it is difficult to effect change.*

For others, a reserve school is attractive for similar reasons:

> *...on my home reserve to provide holistic, culturally appropriate education.*

> *...I would like to teach on a reserve because I'm Aboriginal and I'd like to go back and pass on my positive experiences to children [there].*

> *...band-operated schools have come a long way but they have a long way to go because of not having the right people at the right place at the right time.*

> *...I like teaching in [this] isolated area because I have found that students are eager to learn and are [still] fluent in their language.*

> *...in a reserve school (like the one I'm at) so that I can help Aboriginal students to develop into productive members of society.*

The North has its own appeal:

> *...Prince Albert because of its proximity to both the northern communities and the cities of the south.*
>
> *...in a northern location - I was brought up in the North and I can relate to the needs of students there.*
>
> *...in a small town in the North near a reserve: high needs but also a very friendly environment.*
>
> *...in this band school in the North 90% of the staff are Aboriginal. I have good friends and there is proper funding.*
>
> *...I was sick in the city of being part of the oppressed minority and being called on to be the expert. It is so liberating to work in the North where we are the majority and can make things happen on our own terms.*

For another, the issues are about reversing the stereotypes and extending the Aboriginal role model into the suburbs:

> *...Teachers feel that though it is important to be role models for Aboriginal students they also need to be seen by non-Aboriginal students in order to assist in the changing of stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples. This move away from the typically high Aboriginal population is also seen as being beneficial to the teacher's welfare.*

One teacher sees education extending beyond the walls of the classroom:

> *...I would prefer a wilderness camp setting where you would live and work with a small group of students. I would be able to promote and teach positive choices and decisions about lifestyle even after school.*

Another teacher concludes by painting a picture of the ideal location that all committed teachers would find appealing:

> *. . . [I would teach] in the same location (rural public) but with better living conditions, more energetic teachers, and people in the community who are more youth-oriented. I see a community/child centred school/ atmosphere where everyone is treated with respect and equality [and] where improvement is always the goal.*

ISSUE 6: RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

No study of ways to improve the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers would be complete if it did not in some way begin to explore the issues of racism and discrimination. What emerges from the questionnaires is a striking disparity on this subject between the opinions of the directors of education and the Aboriginal teachers. This disparity reveals the context in which Aboriginal teachers are hired and work in this province. Teachers were asked:

Have you ever felt, because of your ancestry, that you have been discriminated against as a teacher in the school system? If yes, was this discrimination felt because of the actions or remarks of students, staff, administration, parents, or board members? Please elaborate.

Directors were asked similarly:

Have you ever seen or heard evidence of discrimination against a teacher of Aboriginal ancestry? If yes, was this discrimination because of the actions or remarks of students, staff, parents, or board members? Please elaborate.

Sixty percent of the teachers canvassed cited examples of discrimination, whereas only 15 percent of directors said they were aware of any problem in this area. It is clear that more dialogue on this issue must occur.

Examples of discrimination range from subtle feelings of exclusion to the most verbally abusive and racist statements being made. Only rarely do teachers report feeling discrimination at the hands of students with whom they work directly or with board members with whom they have very little contact.

> *...yes, one staff member questioned the idea of focusing in on one particular group (Aboriginal kids).*
>
> *...yes, I can think of incidents of discrimination either directly or indirectly involving me with each of the groups above.*
>
> *...yes, at all levels because I am visibly different - people feel they can assume things about me based on my appearance. They don't always take the time to know me, the individual.*

...yes, in my first position. I had problems with administration, staff, and some parents.

...yes, a parent and a non-Native staff member expressed concerns about my ability to teach.

...parents once tried to pull their child out of my room when they found out I was Native.

...student comments [at a high school] about Indians were derogatory and out-dated. Staff made inappropriate or racist comments.

...parents of students in Native Studies courses tend to display prejudiced attitudes and beliefs.

...yes; with administration the discrimination was not directly at me but rather questioning the funding for a particular [Aboriginal] program -"Why so much money!".

...Working in a school with a very low Native enrolment, a parent questioned me about my qualifications. I stood on firm ground and explained our [TEP] program and my assets....She appeared satisfied with my response.

...yes, staff made assumptions; they only considered me competent in the area they assumed I had specialized in [Native Studies] and didn't want to know about my skills in Math and Drama.

...they asked me for a criminal record check even though I had one done when I applied for my teacher's certificate.

The following three comments by Aboriginal teachers are found in Baillie (p.33):

...In some schools you feel the tension right away - just because you're Native. It's unfortunate - they have a high population of Native kids. If that's the way they treat Native teachers, what about the kids?

...TEPers know this, but it's time all education students knew it - racism is there, in teachers, in schools. You have choices to either educate those that will learn, or fight with or ignore those that won't.

...Staff at this school know I was hired to "fill the quota". I'm the token Aboriginal and that's how I'm treated.

Such perceptions have profound effects on teacher morale and retention rates as the following comment illustrates.

> *...the principal and vice-principal didn't agree with my way of handling a particularly difficult student but they pulled rank several times. The VP was a joke to everybody because of his obvious laziness and lack of commitment.*

Here is a class-room management and discipline issue that to the outsider may appear to be free from elements of discrimination. The teacher involved, however, believes that his status as an Aboriginal teacher somehow affects the decision-making process. Discipline and respect for self and others is very much a subject that needs to be discussed from a cross-cultural perspective. Implicit is the assumption that because administration is non-Aboriginal and officially "knows best", there is little room for real collaboration and consensus-building which is an appropriately Aboriginal approach to an issue like discipline. In other words, this situation can be considered a failure of cross-cultural communication because of the subjective-decision making around appropriate methods of disciplining.

If nothing else, this scenario points to the complexity of the issue of racism and its implications for leadership and teacher effectiveness. What is the objective reality when dealing with perceptions and feelings, particularly in a cross-cultural context? As one teacher, an 18 year veteran, commented:

> *...Yes, at all levels. All people discriminate and some don't even know they are discriminating.*

Discrimination may take many forms, but for those who are on the receiving end, it is a deeply invasive and profoundly personal experience . One SIFC graduate noted that teaching in a band school she did not feel discrimination as an Aboriginal person but she was regarded as an outsider and the object of thoughtless and cruel "jealousy, gossip and vandalism".

Officers with The Human Rights Commission report that individuals of a minority or designated group can never be sure if they are being discriminated against as an individual person or as a member of a group: whether it be as an immigrant, a person of colour, a homosexual, an Aboriginal, as a woman, or simply as an outsider.

A graduate working in a band school comments:

> *...Senior administration are very closed-minded about qualities and qualification of Native women teachers*

whereas a male colleague in the same school reports he has never experienced discrimination.

For an Aboriginal person who does not fit the stereotypical picture of an Aboriginal, there are further complications:

> *...[On the one hand] other teachers tell me I shouldn't worry about having my contract renewed because I'm Aboriginal. This [angers] me because I'd like to think I keep my job because I'm good at it. [On the other hand] I do feel discriminated against at times because people don't see me as an Aboriginal person.*

Few teachers are as blunt as the following one who summarized the variety of forms that discrimination can take:

> *. . . Discrimination is something that almost all Aboriginal staff are having to deal with...from many different levels. Teachers have been told by students, "I don't have to listen to an Indian (Squaw, Breed etc.). Sometimes parents challenge the decision-making of Aboriginal staff concerning disciplinary matters or even curriculum content. There often seems to be an edge of racism to their comments. Our co-workers also seem to be uneasy as to what to say to us or how to treat us. Examples that I have personally had to deal with include:*
>
> *"Hi, my neighbour/brother-in-law/friend is Native, are you related?"*
> *"We don't have any Indian kids here, so I don't know what you could do here."*

A few directors, notably those working in the large urban systems, do acknowledge that discrimination exists even if they do not have first hand knowledge of it. One director remarked that just because he hadn't seen it, "does not, however, mean it is not happening". Another director reports a different kind of reverse discrimination:

> *One of the issues we deal with is Aboriginal teachers who have racist attitudes towards students of Aboriginal ancestry.*

Directors note that very few acts of discrimination or racism are formally reported within the school systems. Aboriginal teachers feel a lack of comfort in reporting these issues because there is a fear of backlash, or "making things worse", of being labelled a "trouble-maker" or a "spoiler" or complainer. Often the lack of support and the

generally high level of ignorance of Aboriginal issues makes the task of calling into question prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes and behaviour an overwhelming one.

Most teachers prefer to take the long term approach and work quietly with their students in the classroom, sorting out the stereotypes and misinformation that children and youth bring from home and the society at large. The pressure to assimilate into and accept the status quo puts a further burden on Aboriginal teachers to conform and not make waves.

Many Aboriginal teachers report that they are somehow regarded as "exceptions". Staff room slurs can be made about Aboriginal people, prefaced or followed by the proviso "Oh, we don't mean **you. You're different; not like them.** This has a profoundly alienating effect on Aboriginal teachers, isolating them, even if unintentionally, from both their non-Aboriginal colleagues as well as from the Aboriginal community at large.

Much of the failure of Aboriginal children in the schools has been accounted for by "blaming the victim", suggesting that factors such as "cultural deprivation, lack of delayed gratification, the culture of poverty, and [an] externalized locus of control are responsible for inequality". (Agocs et al, p. 56) What are the implications then of what has been called this "new racism" for Aboriginal teachers, who are regarded by non-Aboriginals as presumably coming from the same "disadvantaged group"? Even intended as a complement, **"You're not like <u>them</u>"** becomes both an insult to the individual teacher and an affront to all Aboriginal people.
Two directors commented:

> *...Discrimination occurs not in the form of dire remarks and is not intent[ional] discrimination, but may exist in more subtle forms and perhaps is reflected more in statements that show a lack of awareness and sensitivity.*
>
> *...it is not intentional, but staff refer to "**us**" and "**them**", and "the way **they** are".*

Discriminatory behaviour may be intentional or unintentional; it may be motivated by ignorance, defensiveness, anger, or fear. Schools have to ask themselves what the results of such behaviour are on the hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers.

Another director adds:

> *...Racism permeates our society. Consequently we must constantly deal with it by calling attention to it and educating people.*

Baillie (p.43) documents the comments of a provincial school superintendent sensitive to some of the cross-cultural issues that can create misunderstandings:

> *...I think an area that needs to be looked at is the STF code of ethics and the role of the teacher as a professional. Usually, if people are having a conflict with someone, they'll speak to the person directly, but in some cultures it's considered impolite to do that. It's considered more polite to go to someone else and have them speak for you. In our culture, that causes problems. I think administrators need to know these differences, because it puts them in a mediation role and that's not something they're used to.*

One director answered yes to knowing of discrimination at all levels but failed to provide examples and added, "This type of question is too general and wide-sweeping. Only exact information will provide an accurate answer".

Discrimination, if it takes the form of the back-handed and patronizing complement, feels like a slap in the face:

> *...I have had Board members and teachers indicate that they have been pleasantly surprised with how well the Aboriginal teachers have done.*

Another director notes that he has heard of but never witnessed prejudice towards Aboriginal teachers by both students and staff and adds:

> *...We are intending to raise the awareness of such situations by conduction a mini-service at a principal's meeting.*

This is a step in the right direction, one that many school jurisdictions report in their Equity Plans they are taking; but one must conclude this section by remarking that much more must be done to combat the negativity, ignorance, and racism in society that permeates our schools if the hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers is to improve.

If school climates are permeated by subtle and not so subtle racism, as Aboriginal teachers tell us it is, the implications will be seen in poor retention rates, low morale, humiliation, fear of reprisals and a group of Aboriginal teachers who are not able to work to their potential.

Much work needs yet to be done. A useful starting point, and one that was developed and has the official backing and support of the SSTA and the Canadian School Boards Association is the handbook: **Employment Equity for Racially Visible and Aboriginal Peoples: An Anti-Racist Framework and Manual for School Boards**.

RECOMMENDATION #8

LEADS AND THE STF SHOULD JOINTLY DEVELOP CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION AND ANTI-RACIST WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS TO BE DELIVERED AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY FOR ALL THEIR MEMBERS, AS WELL AS PROVIDING SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR BOTH TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF.

Respondents to this survey conclude that a key role in creating and sustaining a healthy school climate rests with those in a position of responsibility: the principals, superintendents and directors of education. The professional body representing educational administrators in Saskatchewan, LEADS, is an obvious partner for the SSTA and the STF on this question of leadership.

Issue 7: Improvement for Aboriginal Students

So much of what we do in education is subject to interpretation and opinion. Because education is basically a humanistic process, a complex "in-your-face" communication activity (as it was once described by Dr. David Friesen of the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina), matters of perception, particularly in the area of education equity, need to be validated. Aboriginal teachers and Directors of Education were asked the same question:

Is it your impression that the situation for school-age children of Aboriginal ancestry is improving or deteriorating?

A. Forces that Hinder Retention

Of the directors surveyed, 75% stated, with relatively few qualifiers, that the situation is definitely improving. Aboriginal teachers were more equivocal. Only 50% were able to state the situation was improving; most provided qualifiers and codicils prefaced by "but".

Only two directors believe the situation is deteriorating in their jurisdictions:

> *...I, unfortunately, see little change in the situation of Aboriginal youth despite many well-meaning efforts by the school division and by the First Nation.*

...I believe it is deteriorating for a number of reasons, not the least of which [are] racism, poverty, drugs and alcohol.

Fifty percent of the Aboriginal teachers concur with this assessment but give more detailed reasons for the lack of progress for Aboriginal students. As the comments of the teachers show, this is a complex issue composed of a number of interrelated socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors:

...[it] is deteriorating because education as a whole is being attacked and our Aboriginal kids seem to get the short end of the stick first.

...deteriorating due to social problems and lower expectations from parents and teachers.

...it is my impression that things are deteriorating. While Aboriginal teachers can effect change in their own classrooms, the system itself is failing. There are low expectations for Aboriginal students. Teachers are afraid of being labelled racist if they insist on students meeting high expectations.

...I don't know for sure, but I still see non-Aboriginal teachers doing units on "Indians" and teaching about us in the past tense.

...deteriorating....Arts and crafts and cultural events are not enough. Historical information needs to be incorporated to tie Aboriginal people to the economic, social and civic life of this province.

...I am not sure how effective we are really being; the drop-out rate does not seem to be declining.

...In this division [rural, north-central], there is still little improvement; very few Métis or First Nations [students] graduate from High School.

...We still have a long way to go. The system still believes in generalizing and there is still much opposition ...to Indian education. It is so disconcerting to see.

...there are so many problems facing Native children that success should not be measured [only] by the number of high school graduates. It is better to graduate one student with good basic skills rather than 20 who don't know how to read and write.

...it is deteriorating because of social conditions and a lack of cross-cultural training for all teachers.

...deteriorating (on this reserve)....Parents do not teach or model values.

...so much more work needs to be done to help Native students feel proud of their identity.

...the Aboriginal population is increasing significantly but hiring Aboriginal teachers is not.

...Students of Aboriginal ancestry are becoming lost in our society. Segregating students is not necessarily the key but rather enforcing change in the school system to accommodate the problems needs to be a priority.

Share the reflection of one teacher on the situation she finds herself in everyday and speculate on the long term effect this has on teacher morale and teacher retention:

...Many northern Aboriginal communities often have a large population of school-age children. As a result, classrooms are often crowded and teachers end up being more of a child-sitter than a teacher. Schools need to reassess the kinds of behavioral and physical problems that children have and hire appropriate and qualified resource and support staff so teachers can have assistance in teaching the right skills to help these students to be able to manage in their lives. At present I feel unqualified to help students with severe emotional and psychological problems. I, and other teachers, feel helpless at times and end up being stressed because these children have many demands and needs that do not seem to be met.

B. Forces that Support Retention

What are the improvements for Aboriginal students that Aboriginal teachers and directors see?

Directors responses to this question range from the unqualified "there have been constant improvements" to "improving, but research is required in order to determine accurate information".

Seventy five percent of the Directors surveyed cited improvements in the education of Aboriginal students although most are aware that progress does not come easily. For some, the issue is still a "we/they" problem: students are expected to adapt to the school system rather than having the system adapt to accommodate the students.

> *...Improving - we accept students willingly. The problem with students of Native ancestry is to teach them at the level at which we receive them. Often age and past experience are not conducive to appropriate teaching/ learning habits.*

> *...I believe that the educational sensitivities, in terms of staffing and curricular modifications (i.e. incorporation of positive aspects of Aboriginal heritage) continue to improve. Aboriginal children have every reason to be very proud of their heritage.*

Even further progress will be made when the heritage of Aboriginal peoples is something that we all see as part of our provincial and national identity, something of which we can all be proud, something from which we can all learn, something which we need as we enter the twenty-first century.

RECOMMENDATION #9

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION SHOULD ACT TO EXTEND EDUCATION EQUITY TO ALL PROVINCIAL SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS IN ORDER TO VALIDATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THEIR CULTURES IN THIS PROVINCE.

As members of the Indian and Métis Unit of the Department of Education attest, this is not yet the prevalent attitude in all schools. This adds to the burden of responsibility that Aboriginal teachers shoulder in effecting changes for all students.

For some other directors, two key factors in improving the education of Aboriginal children are time and support:

> *...generally improving. As generations pass the level of education of Aboriginal parents and their children continues to improve.*

> *...Slowly improving, but we have a long way to go. Also we must recognize that success of the children will require a strong collaborative effort between the home and the school.*

The increase in the number of Aboriginal students creates the impression that there are more "problems":

> *...It is both improving for some and deteriorating for others. We are seeing improved High School completion rates but more severe problems from specific students.*

At the same time, there are specific initiatives that Directors of some systems can point to that have made a difference.

> *...During the past year we have seen an increase in Native children in one of our schools and I think this is due, in part, to the IMED program that was implemented in the fall of '93. The program has encouraged better relationships and better cultural understandings between the school and the reserve.*

Such initiatives lead to results:

> *...It is improving; attendance is better, drop-out rates have been reduced. Bands are usually quite supportive of the schools.*

Other staffing, attitudinal, and curricular elements contribute to success:

> *...Improving. Changes to the curriculum and attitudinal changes [are] helping a great deal.*
>
> *...improving because of a greater thrust and understanding of "culture" needs, elders' programs and appropriate curriculum.*
>
> *...improving - additional programs: community schools, Native Studies, cultural programs, Cree language instruction; and additional staff: First Nations and Métis teachers and instructional assistants, counsellors, and home-school liaison personnel.*
>
> *...definitely improving through the existence and introduction of many new programs: Inner City programs, school-community workers, Feed the Hungry, extra guidance counsellors, stay-in-school initiatives. We also have been concentrating on developing consistent procedures to deal with racist incidents.*

RECOMMENDATION #10

THE ROLE AND SIZE OF THE INDIAN AND MÉTIS EDUCATION BRANCH OF SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATION TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SHOULD BE EXPANDED SO THAT MORE CURRICULA (INCLUDING ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES) REFLECTING AN ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVE CAN BE DEVELOPED AND INTEGRATED ACROSS THE GRADES AND MORE PILOTING AND IN-SERVICING OF THAT MATERIAL CAN OCCUR AND AN INCREASED PACE.

Half of the Aboriginal teachers surveyed agree with the directors that there are improvements, albeit at a slower pace than anyone would want. Teachers are able to comment specifically about their own schools and divisions but are less sure of over-all progress in the province.

...improving, but it is a slow process!

...improving, but too slowly.

...in our school division [urban separate] the situation for Aboriginal students has greatly improved over the past five years.

...we have a school [urban public high school] with potential.

...in some urban centres it is improving with the establishment of First Nations Schools.

...in my school division [rural public] a great deal is being done to improve the situation.

...here [band-controlled school] I believe the situation is starting to improve.

...community based schooling situations are making progress and improvements in meeting the needs of Aboriginal students. Other schools? Questionable!

...Yes, where the community is predominately Native, I think it is improving. It certainly isn't ignored as it used to be. The number of community schools has increased; they were non-existent when I was that age.

Aboriginal teachers recognize the important role they play in any progress made.

> *...It is improving because...more Aboriginal teachers are being employed.*
>
> *...I am not really sure, but I hope that things are improving. With more and positive Native teachers the young people can look forward to positive influences in their lives.*
>
> *...More and more teachers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) want to, and have to, understand the different cultural needs of Aboriginal kids.*
>
> *...it is improving with more and more Aboriginal teachers and a much better awareness of Aboriginal issues by all teachers.*
>
> *...They [Aboriginal children] are treated more fairly. I see relationships develop between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. I see [Aboriginal] cultures being taught.*
>
> *...it is slowly improving because of individuals; care-givers and teachers who do care for all children.*

These care-givers, role models, and agents of change form the core of the "new" schools where Aboriginal issues are front and centre:

> *...The situation seems to be improving. Many schools are implementing cultural programs (including language classes, dancing and singing, Pow-wows, and Elders) to teach children about their heritage. Basic needs are also considered with snack programs, after school programs and activities, and mentor programs which provide positive role models for children from single parent families especially.*
>
> *...it is improving because the needs of Aboriginal kids and statistics about them are always thrown around in the public eye. Also the pressure by Aboriginal politicians and educators won't let things ever get as bad as they once were.*
>
> *...the situation is improving in some ways with more Aboriginal teachers and community schools. However, so many [Aboriginal children] are still in trouble. All teachers and all schools need cross-cultural awareness training - even if they have no Aboriginal students in the school.*

Issue 8: Improvements for Aboriginal Teachers

Directors and Aboriginal teachers were asked the same question:

Please explain whether or not you think the situation for teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in this province is improving or deteriorating.

For this question there was a greater discrepancy between the answers of teachers and directors than on the question of improvement for Aboriginal children. Only 30% of Aboriginal teachers believe the situation to be improving, while 80% of directors see improvement. One director commented that it is improving "just as it should for everyone". Again, in the context of employment equity, applying the same rules to everybody may result in inequitable outcomes.

A. Forces that Support Retention

There are a number of factors that directors cite to help explain improvement for Aboriginal teachers:

> *...improving, thanks in large part to the programs such as SUNTEP and NORTEP.*
>
> *...due to more equity plans, improved teacher training, and increased numbers of Native students, I think the situation is improving.*
>
> *...improved due to increased understanding of Native issues and also increased recognition [of the] need to recruit teachers of Native ancestry.*
>
> *...improving; [there are] greater opportunities for involvement and leadership, [and] increased awareness on the part of all staff of the need to address the issues of racism, discrimination, and diversity.*
>
> *...definitely improving. Five years ago I would not have been able to identify a qualified Aboriginal candidate. Today, however, my file is considerably fuller.*
>
> *...improving. We have been able to hire two people for this fall. As well, we have had reasonable numbers of qualified applicants for the positions.*

While the high quality of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs and the opportunity for leadership for Aboriginal staff are key factors, many directors find the issues of recruitment and hiring to be still somewhat problematical:

> *...It is improving slowly and positively. Unfortunately there [are] limited teachers graduating from the university and the economy is limiting available positions.*
>
> *...I believe it is improving; however, since we have been down-sizing for the last 10 years, I have not had the opportunity to really test this out.*
>
> *...It is improving, but they need to be encouraged to apply more for available positions. Also the supply [numbers] is still very inadequate.*
>
> *...Few teachers are in a position of resigning from our system so as a result we are not able to hire many teachers either. We are at least maintaining staff numbers.*

For the thirty percent of Aboriginal teachers who do see improvement, it is primarily the increase in the number of Aboriginal teachers working throughout the province in a variety of schools and jurisdictions that is an indicator of progress.
It is clear from the survey comments to this question that the growing number of Aboriginal teachers has created its own tensions, apprehensions, and concerns.

> *...well, we <u>are</u> being hired....*
>
> *...I think it is improving because there are many Aboriginal teachers employed and doing well. This is helping the situation for new [Aboriginal teachers] coming out of university.*
>
> *...improving. There are considerably many more Native staff than when I went to school.*
>
> *...I think it's improving because there are more of us.*
>
> *...there seems to be more openings for teachers in urban settings and rural reserve settings.*
>
> *...improving to some degree due to the hiring of more [Aboriginal] teachers.*
>
> *...improving because I see so many more [Aboriginal] teachers and they are positive role models.*

...I think the situation is improving and will continue to improve as more Aboriginal teachers are seen to be very good teachers.

...Aboriginal teachers are great resources and assets to <u>any</u> school. I [also] believe we have the opportunity for advancement.

Behind the numbers, there are other positive factors,including the assumptions and directions of the TEPs and the Human Rights Commission:

...improving. I believe TEPs are graduating some excellent teachers!

...improving because of affirmative action and the TEPs.

...I see Aboriginal people becoming well-educated and therefore, with education equity, teachers are gradually becoming a part of [the teaching] profession.

... Improving with the help of our wise people sharing their knowledge with the communities and improving also with the help of the Human Rights Commission.

...There are also more of us with a voice and in a position where we can say what we are thinking.

...improving: there is now a sense of correcting some social "wrongs" in our society. I believe that Native teachers are a basic link to that being a success.

B. Forces that Hinder Retention

Even though all of the teachers who were surveyed were working, seventy percent of them saw little or no improvement, often citing the difficulty in finding employment in particular parts of the province.

...I'm worried that Aboriginal teachers are not going to be hired because of cut backs. Too many of us don't have permanent contracts.

...I think that some boards feel they are meeting the Aboriginal employment criteria by just hiring Aboriginal teacher associates rather than certified teachers.

...there are many jobs being cut throughout the province which doesn't help.

...It depends on which part of the province. Certainly the situation has improved in our school division [urban separate] but it is my understanding that our board is light years ahead of other boards in the province.

...I think it [is] at a stand still and may deteriorate with the cut backs that are happening in education around the province. This is noticeable in my [urban public] system.

...It is still very difficult to get into some systems, especially where there is a high Native population with negative relations [with the non-Native community].

...deteriorating because of the political withdrawal of much needed funds for our institutions.

...It is not improving in the urban centres. To my knowledge most TEP graduates are in the North or on reserves.

...I think it is [improving] in the North, but not in the cities. This is too bad because of the number of urban Natives.

These comments reflect an awareness by Aboriginal teachers that the shift in the demographics of the school-age population and the changing profile of the teaching profession is not without political implications. It raises a key issue of power and its redistribution, and of the ability of school boards to resist, ignore, accommodate, or embrace change.

A minority of Aboriginal teachers are aware of dangers in such situations and are critical of some of their peers:

...Native teachers must not lose their true values and beliefs after being employed by a system. We need to remain strong and not become subject to non-Native values.

...it is improving in terms of numbers but not necessarily in quality.

...What is lacking are good quality Native teachers. We need better Native teachers [because] a weak Native teacher is not a good role model for anybody.

Others point to the power struggle for teaching positions in a tight job market and the underlying issues of discrimination and alienation which can "create a crisis of confidence, a lack of self-esteem, lower expectations, and the perception that one has to be twice as good as a member of the dominant group to succeed". (Agocs et al, p.56).
Informed educators have long been aware of these effects of discrimination on Aboriginal children; in an employment situation such discrimination can have the same effect on Aboriginal teachers.

> *...Not much change. There is a hard line of white middle class men who control the union and director levels. Your survive as an Aboriginal teacher only if you are good. If you are ordinary, they allow the rednecks to eat you.*
>
> *...deteriorating - [roles for] participating in effecting changes in the school system are not allotted for Aboriginal teachers [who] are considered experts but not treated as such...as a means of growing and developing.*
>
> *...deteriorating because white teachers are afraid for their jobs because of equity and are quite vocal, for example, not all accepting TEP interns.*
>
> *...Although more Aboriginal teachers are hired, the situation hasn't improved. Aboriginal teachers still feel alienated from other staff. Does the hiring of Aboriginal teachers for equity programs in the province help or hinder the process of alienation?*
>
> *...You must have mandatory standards and expectations for your teachers as well as your students. Once the Aboriginal teachers leave their TEP and go to the classroom, I believe that the high standards and the ideals get pulled down by a mediocre system.*
>
> *...It appears to be deteriorating. The public system seems intent on keeping Aboriginal teachers at the elementary level. Also, it appears they hire only those Indian/Métis that don't look "too Indian" for high school positions. Anyway...it is like we came this far; now we can teach elementary, but it will take us another generation to become secondary teachers.*

This last comment deserves some statistical clarification. Of the Aboriginal teachers involved in this survey, only 43% are working at the elementary level. Fourteen percent identified middle years teaching and another 38% identified assignments in high schools. A further 5% are working as counsellors, tutors, consultants or ABE instructors. The total percentage of TEP graduates surveyed <u>not</u> working at the elementary level for which they were trained is 56%.

In other words, the great need for Aboriginal teachers at the middle years and secondary level is being filled with teachers whose training has been at the elementary level. This presents a further burden of responsibility, and in some cases, feelings of inadequacy, on teachers who feel ill-prepared. It also points to systems doing the best they can with the personnel resources available to them.

Educational partners with input into the delivery of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs in this province will have to address the issue of middle years and secondary training immediately if the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers is going to continue to improve.

RECOMMENDATION #11

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE TEPS IN PROVIDING PREPARATION OF ABORIGINAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, SECONDARY TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL TEACHERS-IN-TRAINING MUST BECOME A PRIORITY IN THIS PROVINCE.

Further, the issue of graduate work, at the diploma and Master's level, which will prepare Aboriginal teachers for administrative positions must be appropriate, culturally-based and continue with the philosophical assumptions of the TEPs which define the Aboriginal teacher as a role model and agent of change. School boards have a responsibility to target individuals for such leadership if the assumptions of both Education and Employment Equity are to be applied across the educational system. One school director commented that such leadership is about changing the power structure:

> *...We need more Aboriginals at the administrative level. This will be slow to come, because we're dealing with politics. We're dealing with the problem that when admin people with First Nations background come in, they're going to want things done differently. Once you let them in you're going to have to trust them and let them make changes.*

RECOMMENDATION #12

WHILE THERE IS STILL GREAT UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATORS IN THE CLASSROOM, AN EVEN GREATER DISPARITY EXISTS AT THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL. THE SSTA AND LEADS SHOULD FIND WAYS OF ENCOURAGING QUALIFIED ABORIGINAL TEACHERS TO COMPLETE APPROPRIATE GRADUATE WORK AND TAKE ON POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP IN PROVINCIAL SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS.

CONCLUSION

1. Teachers as individuals

Both teachers and directors see the transmission of culture as a key role to be played by Aboriginal teachers. There is, however, an important difference, a matter of perspective on this issue that needs clarification. School systems explicitly and implicitly replicate culture. It becomes a matter of consciously choosing which cultures and world views are replicated. This may put the Aboriginal teacher in a double bind.

On the one hand they can be viewed as skilled professionals who happen to be Aboriginal, say like a lawyer or dentist or real estate agent or sales clerk who is of Aboriginal ancestry. In such cases ancestry may be regarded as something separate from, if not irrelevant to, the professional skills required to be a successful teacher, or dentist, or sales clerk.

It is clear that opponents to education equity plans, whether they be Aboriginal or not, hold to this view, resenting any special status to individuals of Aboriginal ancestry. Baillie (p.36) points out that some of the younger students in the SUNTEP program, high school graduates for the most part, "seem quite prepared to be role models, but in the sense that they will be professionals who can be identified as Aboriginal".And yet Aboriginal Teacher Education programs in this province and across Canada were founded on the principle that Aboriginal teachers needed to transmit Aboriginal culture and teach from an Aboriginal perspective. For some this is a question of assimilation versus integration.

Special status, within the context of Education Equity, brings with it a high degree of expectation, self-imposed by the individuals themselves, fostered by the TEPs, and hoped for by the school systems who hire them to not only transmit but to retrieve and create Aboriginal culture, teach from an Aboriginal perspective, fight racism, and be exemplary figures to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. These high level expectations go far beyond being a competent teacher who happens to be Aboriginal. School boards will have to be clear about what their expectations of these individuals are.

Among other things this survey shows a wide variety of Aboriginal teachers, each one an individual whose perspective is unique. There are those, clearly a minority, who do not believe in Education Equity or special status; there are those who wish to see themselves as professionals who happen to be Aboriginal; those who want to teach Aboriginal content, those who want to be role models, and those who want to teach in an Aboriginal way and impart an Aboriginal world-view. School boards, in clarifying their expectations for Aboriginal teachers will have to take the individuality and differences among these teachers into account as well.

2. Taking the next steps

How can individual school boards most productively use the materials gathered in this survey? What is the next step in ensuring that recruitment and retention continue to improve?

It is obvious that there is no **one** way to effect positive change. Each school division must come to terms with their own particular situation .

One way to do this would be to use this report as a starting point of discussion of the issues.

What we are really talking about here is establishing or reaffirming a process of communication: dialogue, sharing, building consensus. This process is neither formal nor glamorous; rather it is one of those "face-to-face" human activities that will, as Arnold Minors has indicated, effect changes by being "planned, proactive...and almost always co-operative" (p.3).

Step 1: Focus and Plan

Start by forming an informal focus group (much less formal than a committee) composed of concerned professionals in the division, including willing Aboriginal teachers and associates and others who have demonstrated a high degree of commitment to proactive change.

It is likely that such a group already exists, particularly if the division has already adopted Education Equity Policies. Let this group determine their terms of reference and the scope of the review and/or changes they wish to undertake.

Arnold Minor's six stage model of school systems in transition, From Uni-versity to Poly-versity may be a useful tool to assess to scope of the change required. Strong support from the Trustees and the Administration is necessary from this first step on.

Step 2: Dialogue and Identify Issues

Begin with the list of questions posed in the executive summary of this report (see p.54) that all school personnel should be comfortable in discussing. Use a round-table discussion to identify issues. Administration should limit their involvement to listening, note-taking and clarifying at this point. Highlight issues raised in the report that are of particular concern to the focus group. Frame them with suggested proposals for change at the local level. See how this change fits with the overall Equity Policy of the school division.

Step 3: Build Consensus

When the focus group has identified key questions and issues, broaden the communication base by holding a workshop for the trustees, and parent groups with the focus group.

Use the workshop as an opportunity to return to the list of questions and get further input from the trustees and parent groups.

Look at each of the 12 recommendations in this report and reach consensus on which ones apply to the local situation, and which ones require action (see p. 13-14).

For the sake of clarity, let us focus, by way of an example, on recommendation #3 because it is a locally determined and relatively discrete issue.

Recommendation #3 states Aboriginal students in high school must be encouraged to enter the teaching profession. School trustees should look to providing incentives in the form of loans and bursaries to outstanding Aboriginal students who choose to become educators.

Step 4: Promotion in the Community

How can this recommendation become a reality, assuming as we have, that it has been identified, through the focus group, the parent group, and the trustees, as a worthy objective?

Each division will have its own approach to the implementation of such a recommendation.
The focus group may wish to have several Aboriginal high school students speak to the trustees about the need for financial support.
The trustees may see these students as emissaries or ambassadors for the school system and wish them to help to build broader community based support by having the students speak at local church or service clubs or chamber of commerce functions. The STF local may wish to become involved; friendship inns or other local Aboriginal groups may wish to lend assistance.
The focus of a bursary program, while soliciting financial support, can be the catalyst for effecting grass-roots communication about equity. It has the advantage of having a specific goal that all can participate in.

Step 5: Make Connections

Come to some agreements about time-lines and implementations. Delegate responsibility and authority back to administration, but ensure the direction comes from the grass-roots: the classroom teachers, the parents, the trustees.

Strategize links: from whom do we need assistance, to whom do we need to talk?

Leadership by administration at this point is crucial. Playing the role of liaison between the different groups, central office helps to foster the sense of ownership and consensus that will develop and help to keep the project proactive and co-operative.

Step 6: Implementation

Implement the plan: capitalize on the interest, good-will, and commitment generated in the promotional and connecting steps to raise the money and award the bursary.

Step 7: Publicity and Education

Advertise and publicize: make sure that the public relations side of the venture is not lost; use the local media effectively; seize the opportunity to educate the community at large, not only about the equity issues at stake, but of the leadership that the trustees have taken.

Step 8: Review

Let the focus group monitor, review and evaluate what has occurred; identify the positive and negative forces that have been exhibited during the process. Make recommendations to the Board for continuation of the bursary plan, with necessary revisions if necessary.

Step 9: Begin Again

Begin the cycle again, focusing on another issue that emerges from the same process that will enhance the goals of equity in the division. The number of issues that can be dealt with at any one time will depend on the time and resources available in the particular division. It is always better to enjoy success by limiting the scope of a project than to be disappointed by a lack of success because a plan is too ambitious.

3. Looking Ahead

Through this survey of the views of Aboriginal teachers on the issues of recruitment and retention, a profile has emerged of a diverse group of dedicated professionals. They are sincere, intelligent, literate, by turns optimistic, militant, frustrated, enthusiastic and alienated. Their hopes for the future are both personal and professional, indeed the two are not separate. Leadership and power are the key issues that will continue to animate the change process over the next decade. School divisions must be ready and able to provide opportunities for this extension of leadership and power to Aboriginal educators beyond the walls of the classroom.

Directors of education in jurisdictions with Equity plans have shared many useful comments and suggestions about the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers who, in turn, have also provided many specific ways to improve the situation. We must listen to these voices; they make equity a concrete, substantive issue, not just some carefully chosen words of a mission or policy statement. Valuing diversity, sharing power, managing change, these are the larger issues behind the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers. These larger issues have implications not only on recruitment and hiring but on other personnel and staffing issues as well, such as, school and grade assignment, evaluation, mentoring and support, professional development, further education, and promotion. If attention is not paid to these issues, there is a danger that more barriers will prevent Aboriginal teachers from improving their participation in the profession and in the school systems. This survey also shows that there is no easy path; we are working with complex and often painful issues.

Some teachers and some directors clearly see solutions and success; we can learn from them. Others see problems and failure; we can learn from them as well. The frankness of the responses to this survey is a quality that is needed in all discussions of Education and Employment Equity. It also appears that there is no one way to be successful in achieving equity goals; there are no guarantees. It seems clear, however, from the comments generated by the questionnaire, that care and attention to the process of implementing change is as important as the results expected. It is also clear that a receptive, knowledgeable, and caring school and division climate and environment are important for success. We know this is so for Aboriginal children, for all children. The same holds true in attracting and retaining the dedication and loyalty of Aboriginal teachers. Cultivating this environment is a task that must be shared by all the educational partners in this province. Many specific suggestions about improvement in this area have been offered in this report by directors and Aboriginal teachers.

Issues of Equity for Aboriginal teachers are intensely personal and closely felt. Equity issues are not just foundational principles or policy guidelines; they relate directly to daily experience in the school and the community and reflect on their sense of identity and culture.

It is clear that many Aboriginal teachers are seen and see themselves not just as role models but as agents of change and seekers of equality. If they end up bearing this 'burden and responsibility' by simply working within the parameters of what exists - without feeling part of a larger process of change that pushes the limits of those parameters, then there will be a negative impact on recruitment and retention. While many Aboriginal teachers remain optimistic about making those changes, there is also very real frustration at the slow progress being made. We have some, but still not enough, Aboriginal teachers in our classrooms and far too few Aboriginal educators in decision-making positions.

Achieving the goals of equity is not a discrete activity separate from the day to day business of providing educational and support services in a particular jurisdiction. It must permeate all aspects of the policies and procedures of school divisions, for the sake of the children, and for the sake of the teachers.

APPENDICES

Appendix #1.

I. Project Parameters

In April 1994, the Research Centre of the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association approved funding for a research and development proposal entitled **Guidelines for Employing Aboriginal Teachers** (See Appendix #2).

It was agreed that this project would take the form of a report which would include:

1. a description of the context in which equity issues can be discussed, particularly as the issues relate to the changing profile of the Saskatchewan school age population;

2. a brief review of some of the theoretical and practical literature surrounding the topic, specifically a review of the practices of school jurisdictions in this province that have voluntarily adopted equity plans and report on them on an annual basis to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission;

3. analysis of the data collected during the research component of this project, specifically a compilation of the surveys and interviews of practising teachers of Aboriginal ancestry and of those directors of education responsible for the implementation and achievement of the goals of Education Equity;

4. it was subsequently agreed that an overview of this study would be given at the Education Equity Seminar in November 1994 to provide a forum for discussion of effective school board practices, the perspectives of Aboriginal teachers, projections of Aboriginal teacher supply and demand and suggested guidelines for school board policy.

Appendix #2

Research Proposal: THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYING ABORIGINAL TEACHERS.

Submitted by: JAMES McNINCH, Ph.D.

1. Concern Statement

The projected rapid increase in the number of pupils of Aboriginal ancestry in Saskatchewan over the next decade presents many challenges to provincial school boards throughout the province. One of these challenges is to ensure that an appropriate number of qualified teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are successfully recruited, and successfully retained to reflect the Indian and Métis population of the schools. Anecdotal evidence from some directors of education seems to suggest that there is a relatively high turnover rate among newly inducted Aboriginal teachers, even if recruitment has been successful. This can be frustrating to those boards wishing to achieve the goals of their own employment equity plans.

The Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, Donna Greschner, has made it clear that her preference would be for equity plans to expand beyond the current voluntary plans of the nineteen boards to include all the provincial boards. Even without such legislation, however, it is clear that school boards are anxious to implement policies and practices that will ensure improved recruitment and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

2. Project Proposal

In order to ensure that boards are in a position to consider, review, and eventually perhaps adopt such policies and practices, this proposal calls for the writing of a report which will provide relevant background information and projections pertaining to the subject of the supply, demand, recruitment and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

3. Objective

The objective of this proposal is to complete a report and to develop policy guideliness which will be of use to school boards when employing teachers of Aboriginal ancestry. Such a report will be useful to school boards because it will include a review of effective practices and resources currently in place, as well as recommendations in the form of suggested guideliness for boards as they develop, adopt and implement their own policies and practices.

4. Project Design and Methodology

The report will be built on the following procedures:

a) a brief review and summary of the literature in this field
b) a survey of current practices among those boards with employment equity plans in place
c) interviews with a sample number of TEP graduates who will describe their experiences and perspectives
d) established research ethics will be followed.

5. Outcomes

Specific recommendations in the form of suggested guidelines will form the conclusion of the final report. Such guidelines will be developed in conjunction with an advisory group established in cooperation with the SSTA. The report will be of use to boards in continuing to improve educational and administrative practices in this area.

6. Management

The design and work of the project as well as the development of the recommendations will be guided by an appropriate advisory group established in cooperation with the SSTA. Such a group might include: an SSTA trustee, a TEP graduate, and a TEP director, as well as a member of the SSTA Resarch Centre.

7. Timelines

March - June 1994: literature review, survey of school jurisdictions, interviews with TEP graduates, preparation of preliminary report

September 1994: finalization of suggested guidelines

October 1994: completion of report, desktop published and ready for printing

November 1994: presentation of executive summary at the 1994 Education Equity Seminar

438 Avenue D South
Saskatoon, SK
S7M 1R4

March 03, 1994

TO:Barry Bashutski
Director of Education and Research
SSTA
Fax # 352 9633

FROM:James McNinch
Fax # 652-5824
Phone 652 3937

RE: Policy Guidelines for Employing Aboriginal Teachers

Attached is my research proposal for developing a report and policy guidelines for employing Aboriginal Teachers. I appreciate you taking it forward to the SSTA Research Centre Committee for their consideration. In light of recent calls for separate schools and boards for off-reserve Indians and for urban and rural Métis, this subject remains timely.

I would welcome the opportunity to research and write on a topic with which I am quite conversant. I am well-aquainted with the perspectives of the various educational partners on these issues. I am glad that you have indicated that this topic should be a high priority with the SSTA this year.

If there is any other information I should provide or more detail that is required from the committee please let me know.

Thanks.

Appendix #3 Research Methodology

The data was collected in the following ways:

a] a questionnaire was distributed at the end of April 1994 to participants of the AWASIS conference in Saskatoon. (see Appendix #4). AWASIS is the special subject council of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation which provides a forum for professional development and networking for Indian and Métis educators working at all grade levels in the province. It is not restricted as a council to the subject area of Native Studies alone. From approximately 250 participants who fit the criteria of being classroom teachers of Aboriginal ancestry, 25 questionnaires were completed and returned (a 10% return rate) which provides a useful,if not exhaustive, sample of some of the attitudes and opinions of practising teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

b] The same questionnaire was mailed in the middle of May 1994 to a sample of 35 graduates of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program. Care was taken to ensure that opinions from a cross-section of both Indian and Métis teachers in urban, rural, and reserve schools were canvassed. Self-addressed stamped envelopes where included; the return rate was 50%

*c] A similar and complementary questionnaire was developed (see Appendix #5) and sent to the Directors of Education of each of the 32 school jurisdictions who participated in the October 1993 SSTA Indian and Métis Education Forum entitled: **Engaging Parents as Partners**. The return rate was 48%.*

d] In addition to these survey questions, informal, face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with 6 TEP graduates (2 from Itep, 2 from Nortep, and 2 from Suntep), 3 Directors of Education, and Directors of three of the TEPs.

The sample is relatively small, but then the total number of Aboriginal teachers working in the school systems is still relatively small, still (according to the STF discussion paper on Aboriginal Education) only about 2 percent of the teaching population of the province. In contrast, the nineteen school jurisdictions with more than five percent or more of Aboriginal students which have adopted equity plans represent about a third of Saskatchewan's total student population. (Affirmative Action Forum No.8 (February 1994), p.1.)

Appendix #4

438 Avenue D South
Saskatoon, SK
S7M 1R4

April 10, 1994

Dear AWASIS '94 Conference Planning Committee Members:

A research proposal I submitted to the SSTA has been approved. I am writing a paper which is designed to assist school divisions in developing and improving their policies and procedures relating to the hiring and retaining of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

I have spoken to Allan Tremayne and Karen Schmon about the possibility of enclosing a questionnaire (see draft attached) on this subject in the AWASIS conference kits. This would greatly assist my collection of valuable information. I would appreciate any feed-back the committee may have about the questions I wish to pose to teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry.

I would like to set up a table by the displays where participants can return the questionnaires and where I can engage in some follow-up discussions with them. This project will allow practising teachers to comment directly but anonymously on the existing hiring and retention practices of boards and make suggestions as to how to improve the situation.

Please advise me whether I should register as a participant or as a "display".

Thank-you again for your support.

Yours truly,

James McNinch

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYING ABORIGINAL TEACHERS

A research project funded by the SSTA

School jurisdictions in Saskatchewan need help in developing guidelines for the hiring and retaining of teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry.
Please take a few moments to fill in this questionnaire and provide your own personal and anonymous input into this topic. You, better than anyone else, are in a position to tell school boards what they are doing right and where they can improve.

1. How many years have you been teaching? _____

2. Are you a TEP graduate? Y/N Which one?_____

3. Are you currently in the classroom? Y/N What grade? _____

4. Are you regarded as a generalist or a specialist? _____

5. Please check off the terms which best describe your position:
   Band__ Reserve__ Provincial__ Rural__ Urban

   K-8 __ K-12 __ 9-12 __ Public__ Separate

6. Does your school jurisdiction have an education equity plan? Y/N. Do you think it should have one? Y/N Why or why not?_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Has any school jurisdiction ever made you feel that you are a special asset, because of your particular knowledge and strengths? Y/N Please elaborate:
_____
_____
_____

8. Have you ever felt, because of your ancestry, that you have been discriminated against as a teacher in the school system? Y/N. If yes, was this discrimination felt because of the actions or remarks of Students Y/N Staff Y/N Administration Y/N Parents Y/N Board Members Y/N.
Please elaborate:_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

9. What is the best thing and the worst thing about the job you currently have?

10. How many other teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry do you work with? _____

11. If you had unlimited choice, in what school/location would you teach? Why?

12. Are there some guidelines or special measures that are required, in your opinion, to improve the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry? Please explain.

13. If there was one thing you could say anonymously to your principal or superintendent, what would that be? _____

14. Is it your impression that the situation for teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in this province is improving or deteriorating? Please explain._____

15. Is it your impression that the situation for school-age children of Aboriginal ancestry is improving or deteriorating? Please explain:_____

16. Please provide any other comments on the issue of the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry or any of the questions in this survey.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

****

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. Please return this questionnaire by June 01 in the evnvelope provided. Thanks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Appendix #5

438 Avenue D South
Saskatoon, SK
S7M 1R4

PHONE: 652-3937

May 18, 1994

Director,

Dear

A research proposal I submitted to the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association has been approved. I am writing a paper which is designed to assist school divisions in developing and improving their policies and procedures relating to the hiring and retaining of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry.

I need your help with this. I am sending you a survey which I would like you to complete and return to me by JUNE 01.

Your opinions are highly valued. I am particularly keen to learn of any process or situation in your jurisdiction that you believe is effective in attracting, recruiting and retaining teachers of Aboriginal ancestry. Teachers of Aboriginal ancestry are also being canvassed for their views.

All survey answers will be dealt with as general issues and the anonymity of participants will be assured. Results of the survey and the final paper will be shared at the Equity Seminar in November and available from the Education and Research section of the SSTA.

Please give me a call if there are issues you would like to raise that don't fit the format of the questionnaire.

Thank-you again for taking the time to share your perceptions.

Yours truly,

James McNinch
encl.
[sstalet]

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYING ABORIGINAL TEACHERS

A research project funded by the SSTA

School jurisdictions in Saskatchewan are coming to terms with a changing student and teaching population. Equity plans in 19 of the province's school divisions address some of these changes. As Directors of Education you, better than anyone else, are in a position to explain what works well for you in attracting and retaining teachers of Aboriginal ancestry and where improvements can be made. Please take a few moments to fill in this questionnaire.

1. Does your school division have an equity plan? Y/N

Should it have one? Y/N Why or why not? _____

2. Does your jurisdiction make any special efforts to recruit teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry. Y / N Please explain. _____

3. What is the most beneficial aspect of having teachers of Aboriginal ancestry on staff in your schools? _____

4. Do you think teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry have special needs or require special accommodation because of their background or ancestry? Y / N Please explain.

5. Is there any negative element to the recruitment or retention of Aboriginal teachers in your division? Y / N Please explain. _____

6. Are there some guidelines or special measures that are required in your opinion, to improve the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry? Y / N Please explain. _____

_____

_____

7. Please explain whether or not you think the situation for teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in this province is improving or deteriorating. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Similarly, please explain whether or not you think the situation for school-age children of Aboriginal ancestry is improving or deteriorating, particularly in your jurisdiction. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Have you ever seen or heard evidence of discrimination against a teacher of Aboriginal ancestry? Y / N If yes, was this discrimination because of the actions or remarks of students Y/N staff Y/N parents Y/N board members Y/N
Please elaborate: _____

_____

_____

_____

10. Please provide any other comments on the issue of the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry or on any of the questions in this survey.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

****

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. Please return this questionnaire by June 01 to:

James McNinch
438 Avenue D South
Saskatoon, SK
S7M 1R4

_____

Appendix #6 Language and change

First: a note on the mechanics of reporting qualitative comments. I had two goals: primarily, to ensure that the meaning intended by the respondents was faithfully transferred to this report, and secondarily to achieve this by standardizing spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. I have not changed words used; although in some instances I have deleted person or place names to preserve the anonymity promised. In some instances I have made phrases and fragments more complementary to the flow of this report by adding bridge letters or words in square brackets [like this].

As a teacher of English language and literature, I was interested in the literacy levels of the directors and teachers. Various media would have us believe that literacy levels not only of students but of educators as well have declined over the years. There has also been a largely unspoken prejudice that Aboriginal teachers, because of their social and economic background and in some cases perhaps because of their fluency in Aboriginal languages, have somehow contributed to this perceived deterioration.

I can report that the literacy level of Aboriginal teachers and non-Aboriginal directors are equal. Mechanical errors in punctuation and spelling and sentence construction reflect only that the responses to the surveys were hand-written, immediate, first-draft forms of writing.

I was not surprised by the constant use of the dash (--) to connect thoughts; this too appropriately reflects a "first draft" style of writing. What did surprise me, however, was the almost complete ignorance of directors and teachers alike of the use of the semi-colon (;) to join complete thoughts in one sentence. It would appear that the semi-colon, as the English language continues to change, is becoming arcane.

More interesting was the use of language to name, label, and identify self, groups, and others. Very few teachers or directors make use of capitals to make proper nouns of the words Native, Métis, or Aboriginal. This is partly historical: in the seventeenth century all nouns were capitalized to distinguish them from minor linking words. Usage gradually determined that only "important" people and places would be capitalized. Only in the last five years has the thrust of self-determination rightly accorded status to such terms, elevating them beyond mere descriptors or adjectives, putting them on the same level as words like Inuit, Cantonese, or Australia. Respondents showed great inconsistency; one continues to see native, metis, and aboriginal. Even as adjectives they should be uniformly regarded as nominatives and capitalized. I have taken the liberty in this report to capitalize all words used by directors and teachers to refer to Aboriginal people.

Political correctness, in the best sense of the words, means being sensitive to the wishes and preferences of others. The words and terms used to identify Aboriginal people have changed as they themselves are able to exert influence over word choice and their status in society at large rises. Many respondents suggested that I include a section in this report on "appropriate terminology".

The word **Indian**, for example, is currently being replaced by the phrase **First Nations people** because the word Indian is an obvious misrepresentation based on the misjudgment of European explorers heading west from Europe hoping to arrive in the East Indies. The term First Nations people refers to those Aboriginals who are descendants of the original Indigenous population. The phrase is regarded as appropriate because it not only refers to the primacy of **first** peoples but implies the significance of their social groupings (**nations**), not just individuals. The term also serves to remind us of the diversity of Aboriginals, here in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and around the world. The inclusive term **Indigenous**, meaning belong to "this place" tends to be used in academic circles; anthropological overtones have limited this word to third-world contexts. The politically, or at least constitutionally, correct term, **Aboriginal**, includes Indian, Métis and Inuit peoples. Like many other words, Aboriginal has been imposed, adopted by the Federal government for legal purposes, and accepted by Aboriginal groups to mean "original peoples", although it is fair to say that many Indians and Métis do not self-identify with this term.

In pre-contact times five distinct linguistic groups of Aboriginal peoples formed the first multi-cultural societies in the area now called Saskatchewan. The word Indian, in the Saskatchewan context, is used to refer to the Cree, Dene, Dakota, Nakota, and Anishnabe peoples. The use of this newest term, First Nations people, whether capitalized or not, is rare in this report. Those who do use the term are aware that it does not, at least yet, include the Métis.

The term, **Native**, like the word Indian, is now considered to be an imposed and imprecise, rather than a chosen, description. This term refers to people of Indian ancestry, including the Métis. For the past twenty years it has been considered to be more polite, more politically correct, than the word Indian which began to take on derogatory connotations and was used as a slur. The word, Native, is still very much in current use. Many of the teachers in this survey refer to "native kids", but to themselves as Aboriginal. Readers of this report will notice that both teachers and directors use the term Native to include all Indian and Métis people.

The term **Métis**, complete with the accent over the e both as a guide to pronunciation and a reminder of the connection of many Métis to Europeans of French ancestry, refers to the descendants of Indians and non-Indians. There are some Métis purists

who still would argue that only those who can trace their ancestry to the Red River and Batoche are truly Métis. The word, Half-breed, is still heard in Métis communities and on reserves. Elders of the Métis communities still use the word Half-breed to name themselves; they grew up with and identify with it. Younger Métis will use it as a term of endearment, humour or irreverence. For non-Métis people to use the term today, however, would be regarded as derogatory.

There is then a spectrum of identities to self-determination. There are the legal definitions including status, non-status, and treaty Indians that have been externally imposed. There are the cultural and linguistic differences mentioned above. There are also different levels of ethnicity encompassing traditional, bi-cultural, and assimilated perspectives. There are inequities that exist among and between Aboriginal groups, both on and off reserve, inequities relating to the differing rights acknowledged by band, tribal, provincial and federal governments. Finally, like all diverse groups, the Aboriginal population is dealing with inequities relating to the issues of gender and ability. It is easy to conclude that generalizations relating to Aboriginal peoples are difficult; certainly assumptions based on over-generalizations are particulary dangerous.

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